

Summary: While stuck in modern day Tokyo Inuyasha goes into heat and searches for a powerful mate and in finding that mate changes the lives of everyone involved.

Categories: [Inuyasha](#) Characters: Ensemble, Inuyasha, Ranma/Inuyasha

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Challenges: None

Series: None

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Story Notes:

This is set after the end of the Ranma saga and nearing the end of Inuyasha. All the shards haven't been found and Naraku is still alive. There will be some new attacks in this fic and I'll leave definitions for them at the bottom of each part they appear in.

1. [Chapter 1](#) by cobalt blue
2. [Chapter 2](#) by cobalt blue
3. [Chapter 3](#) by cobalt blue
4. [Chapter 4](#) by cobalt blue
5. [Chapter 5](#) by cobalt blue
6. [Chapter 6](#) by cobalt blue
7. [Chapter 7](#) by cobalt blue
8. [Chapter 8](#) by cobalt blue
9. [Chapter 9](#) by cobalt blue
10. [Chapter 10](#) by cobalt blue

Chapter 1 by cobalt blue

Growling, a lone figure in red robes paced along the roof tops, yellow eyes searching the horizon. Silver hair, finer than silk, flowed like water in the morning breeze as large canine ears twitched in agitation.

The Gods had certainly played fast and loose with his life this time.

Being momentarily stuck in modern day Tokyo, far away from the rolling stretches of demon-infested forests, left him with nothing to vent this rampant energy on, to deplete his vigor till he was too tired to move from his secured sanctuary.

Why, why of all times did his heat have to strike now??

He'd tried working it off on the local gangs of thugs but these pitiful humans couldn't even offer a token resistance to his demon strength. The fever was rising steadily; sweat breaking out on his exposed skin. He had to find a mate and he had to find one NOW!! Below he could hear Kagome and her family preparing for the day ahead. This was all her fault, getting injured at that 'school' of hers, making him stay to help and protect her. He sneered, claws digging into the roof's ceramic tiles. In spite of all that he shared with the girl who was the reincarnation of his first love he had no inclination to seek her out right now.

Kagome was too nice, too gentle, too...too...female. No, he wanted a strong mate.

A powerful MALE mate; one whose skills and power matched his own, who would be willing to use those strengths to dominate him. After all he wasn't going to lift his tail for just any strutting male that came his way. Even in this state he did have his standards. Tenderness could come later after he'd been claimed. Gentle lovemaking wasn't exactly what he craved right now; only raw, animalistic, screaming-till-your-throat-was-raw fucking would quell this raging fire that was burning him alive.

Off in the distance a flare of intense power caught his attention, temporarily highly sensitive ears picking up the sounds of battle.

Fangs glittered in the morning light as he smiled. With long gliding leaps Inuyasha bounded off towards the battle zone.

Strait towards Nerima.

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Nerima was a virtual war zone.

Ever since the marriage ceremony held at the Saotome residence ended in disaster tensions among the areas martial artists had risen to an all time high. Battles, more intense and violent than ever, broke out frequently. Damage costs were running up into astronomical numbers. Hazardous as this was for Nerima's non-fighting residents life had to go on; people going about their business while trying to refrain from landing in the crossfire.

And the cause of this mayhem? The usual of course. Ranma Saotome.

The young martial artist, who'd endured untold hardships and overcame impossible odds, was deeply mired in the center of all this madness. After the wedding relations between Ranma and the people linked to his bizarre life was more than a little strained. Actually, to be perfectly honest, it wouldn't be far fetched to say their relationships had taken a warp-speed nose dive strait into the deepest burning pits of hell.

No longer content with attempting to coerce/blackmail Ranma into retuning with them to China Cologne and Shampoo now waged an all out campaign to kidnap the young man by sheer force. Only his superior skills and power kept the two Amazons from achieving their goal. Ranma shuddered to even think of what would happen should he fall into their hands. A life of slavery, being treated as an object, used to breed more women warriors, repeatedly drugged and beaten to remind of his lowly status. No, Ranma would kill himself before he'd become that purple-headed bitch's 'husband'. The Kunos, Kodachi and Tatewaki, too brain damaged to realize Ranma and his red-haired alternate body were one in the same, still attempted to either kill one body while trying to molest the other. Ranma wasn't especially worried about them since neither one could ever hope to come close to his new level. He'd almost welcome their attack; at least he'd have the satisfaction of pounding their thick, useless, skulls through the pavement for all his past pain at their hands.

Happosai was thankfully out of the picture. The old lecher finally went up against someone he couldn't handle. He'd broken into the house of some newcomers to the area, intent on stealing panties and molesting the two well endowed teenage girls who lived there with their mother. He hadn't counted on the older woman being a semi-retired bounty hunter from the United States. The Grandmaster of the Anything Goes style had just wormed one hand into the screaming youngest girl's bra when a hand ripped him away and slammed him against the wall.

Momentarily stunned by this move, and the older woman's magnificent breasts, Happosai didn't see the bowie knife leave its sheath under her jacket. He did however feel when she used the razor-sharp blade to pin his withered carcass to the wall. The police rushed the heavily bleeding old man to the hospital where it was later discovered the blade had completely severed his spinal cord paralyzing him from the waist down. Happosai would be spending the rest of his life confined not only to prison but to a wheelchair as well. Genma and Soun, upon receiving the news of their master's crippled state, had celebrated for days afterwards.

Ryoga was being an even bigger pain in the ass than usual, attacking whenever his cursed sense of direction led him to the pigtailed martial artist. Just that morning Ranma had to unveil one of his new moves when the umbrella wielding fighter appeared yelling his regular death threat. It'd been supremely satisfying watching Ryoga fly through the air, his hair and clothes smoldering from Ranma's latest chi attack; the fireball was really quite spectacular but could be improved with a little more practice. This was only a short reprieve however; Ryoga, just like a phony yen piece, would show up again sooner or later. When his thoughts turned to Ukyo a terrible pain welled up in his heart. There was so much he missed about the okonomiyaki chef he used to call friend. At first she seemed ashamed of her actions and avoided her so called fiancée. But after this brief cooling down period the spatula wielding girl began chasing Ranma again with a vengeance. She was determined to get her man even if she had to kill to do it. Ranma was

hard pressed to keep the girl from committing murder. The worst of the lot sadly were his so-called family and the Tendos.

Genma and Soun hadn't given up on marrying Ranma and Akane. Relentlessly they pursued the two, never letting up, always hounding them with demands and threats. The pressuring didn't set well with the youngest Tendo daughter. The tenuous truce between Ranma and Akane fell apart shortly after the men renewed their plotting. The more they pressed the more aggressive and short-tempered Akane got. Several dozen letters demanding the girl's expulsion were received after Akane started doing serious damage to the boys at the morning gate, sending a handful to the hospital with broken bones and internal injuries each morning. And when there were no other boys around she took her anger out on him.

Akane's mind spawned a brand new arsenal of foul perverted insults to hurl in his face. It didn't matter anymore that he'd rescued her time and again, that he'd endured one humiliation after another to pull her out of situations her ego, big mouth, and temper got her into, that he'd even killed for her. All she saw when she looked at him was a disgusting pervert who didn't have the sense of a dung beetle. For Nabiki this time of troubles was a virtual Godsend. The middle daughter was making a killing off the betting pools and offering protection to boys who were afraid of her sister. Both Kunos were paying her a small fortune for photos of their supposed true loves which led to Nabiki following him around with that damned camera of hers, snapping off shots whenever he showed a bit of flesh. No time was safe from her paparazzi skills; in the bath, on the toilet, changing clothes. It was mainly her fault in the first place that the wedding failed; to her Ranma was a cash cow and she wasn't about to let anything jeopardize it, not even her own sister's supposed happiness. As long as Ranma and Akane were single her profits remained high, married the pair wouldn't have generated even a quarter of their current level. Therefore they had to stay single.

What perhaps hurt the most however was his Mother's thoughts on the whole matter. Nodoka Saotome's warped version of Bushido, a perversion of all the ancient way of the samurai stood for, led her to insist he marry Akane while retaining the other girls as his mistresses. He was also expected to go on panty raids, grope girls, and act like the pervert Akane believed him to be. She would brook no arguments on the matter since she still retained the seppuku contract Genma had signed before leaving on their training trip. There remained no doubt in Ranma's mind that the woman would demand they fulfill the contract if he followed the true Bushido.

His one refuge during these times was oddly enough Mousse and Kasumi.

The eldest Tendo girl remained unfazed by everything and did her best to offer him good advice and comfort whenever she could. Ranma was truly grateful for her gentle friendship; she'd been more of a mother to him than his real one ever was.

Sometime during the last battle Mousse had experienced a revelation. Shampoo would never be allowed to marry him due to his poor eyesight. Even if he did win the old crone would kill him before he could sully her bloodline with his defective genes. It was with very little regret that he quit the Cat Café and went to work for Ukyo, renting out a room just next door to the restaurant. Freed from his obsession with the purple-headed girl it was Kasumi Mousse ended up dating. It did Ranma good to see such true tender emotions displayed before him and he did everything possible to keep their relationship a secret. On their part the couple did their best to shield Ranma, give the young man some breathing space but those precious moments were few and far between. What time he did manage to find were spent thinking and training.

After hours of meditating and practicing Ranma had come to a decision.

Life in Nerima held no promise for him. If he remained someone would eventually be seriously hurt, perhaps even killed. Since his battles with Herb, the dragon-descended ruler of the Musk, and Saffron, the immortal Phoenix God, Ranma's level of Chi had risen dramatically, far outdistancing his fellow martial artists. Without further training Ranma was a danger to everyone around him.

Therefore he would be leaving today, leaving for good.

With Kasumi's help Ranma had managed to stash away a sizable amount of money. For the first few weeks he intended to spend time up in the mountains where he could train without fear of hurting anyone. Afterwards he'd head to Doctor Tofu's new clinic. Before the good doctor had moved he'd offered Ranma a place to stay and an apprenticeship should he ever decide life in Nerima was too much for him. It was time to take Tofu up on that offer.

His bags were packed, Kasumi had his money ready, all that remained was to clean up and say goodbye.

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Having arrived on the outskirts of the Nerima district Inuyasha was assaulted with a wide variety of power signatures. But which one should he choose? He wanted the best and only the best! No second placers for him!

So Inuyasha set out to investigate all of them, eliminating them one by one till he was left with the top fighter in the area.

Stopping at the place that smelled of good Chinese cooking Inuyasha spied two females; one younger than he the other old and withered.

“Bah! Women!” He spat in disgust and hurried off to the next power signature.

Cologne looked up from her works on the Café’s books. A power unlike any she’d felt before in her long life had just passed by them.

“Great-Grandmother what was that?” Shampoo asked as she came out of the kitchen.

“I do not know child but I believe we’ll find out soon enough.” The Amazon elder stated solemnly.

“Come Shampoo, get cleaned up. It’s time we head over to Son-in-law’s and see what the boy wants to speak to us about.”

The young Amazon bounced for joy. “Aiyah! We go get husband now yes?”

“Perhaps child, perhaps. Now run along or we’ll be late.”

On his way to the next power source Inuyasha spotted a pair of humans walking below him that were just too weird even for him. Both were obviously insane; the girl’s laughter would’ve scared Naraku right out of that damned baboon robe of his, a dark demented light shining in her wide eyes. And the boy kept spouting off bad poetry and declaring his love for several women at once bringing the monk Miroku and his constant lechery to the half demon’s mind. Thankfully the boy’s level was far too small for Inuyasha’s needs so he was passed by. In one place that smelled like those rotten herbs Kaede used to heal wounds laid another power source. But since he was very old and obviously crippled now the half demon discarded him as a contender.

Happosai pulled himself up a little straighter in his wheelchair. If he didn’t know any better the old martial artist would swear he just felt a demon close by, one not making any moves to conceal his or her power. For a moment he thought about going after it before the reality of his situation crashed in on him again. There wouldn’t anymore chases for him.

Depression filled Happosai.

“No more silky little darlings,” he sniffed as big tears welled up in his eyes. “No more nestling into the full blossom of some young dear. All gone.” And he broke down and cried like a little baby.

Drawing ever closer to the power source that drew him here Inuyasha slowed down. How curious, almost all the others he’d checked earlier were converging, heading directly towards the power’s epicenter. Ahead, at the end of the street, lay a small compound and house which currently sheltered his goal along with several others of various but barely noticeable power levels. A small spark of caution flared to life bringing the silver-haired boy to a complete stop. He would wait a bit; observe what was transgressing below before issuing his challenge. So decided Inuyasha shielded his chi and hopped over onto one of the smaller roofs, settling down to watch, sharp ears swiveled forwards to catch ever single word.

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It wasn’t easy to get this bunch of crazies into one area without violence erupting but thankfully none of those gathered were willing to upset Kasumi any farther than she already was. One by one they took their seats and waited for Ranma to make his entrance.

Two thoughts were racing through Ukyo’ mind as she eyed her true rivals; how could she kill

Akane and Shampoo and avoid facing Kasumi for her deeds. As usual her thoughts were being echoed by Ranma's other fiancées.

Who knew exactly what weird snippets of what passed for thoughts were flying around in the Kuno siblings' heads.

Who would really want to know.

Somehow, a minor miracle by a demented god perhaps, Ryoga had made it back from wherever it was Ranma blew him that morning. He was sitting next to Akane, talking to the youngest Tendo girl with that sheepish look on his face.

Nabiki was fuming as she hadn't made any money off this gathering and wasn't sure if she'd be able to. One thing the girl hated was being in the dark about something. How was she supposed to turn a profit if she didn't know what was going on. People didn't fork out money for vague speculation. The clearer the facts the higher the payoff was.

Soun, Genma, and Nodoka were clustered together talking in eager hushed tones. No doubt they thought he was ready to marry Akane and they were discussing wedding plans. Man, were they in for a shock.

"Are you sure you want to do this Ranma?" Mousse asked softly, despite the thorough debugging they'd done earlier, as he picked up the tea tray.

"Yeah, I'm sure." The pig-tailed martial artist sighed. "If I'm ever to find control I have to leave. It's not like there's anything to keep me here anyways 'cept you guys."

"We'll always be there for you Ranma, please remember that will you?"

Gazing into Kasumi's sweet face Ranma nodded. "Thanks Kasumi."

"My pleasure, I just wish there was something more we could do for you. My family has hurt you so terribly." A lone tear escaped from beneath her eyelid. "Daddy's been useless ever since Mother died. I did the best I could to raise my sisters but it obviously wasn't enough. Nabiki's a heartless shark while Akane's become a violent, abusive brat. And there wasn't a single thing I could do to stop it." Unconsciously her hands clenched, leaving little moon-shaped indentations etched into her palms.

Ranma took her gentle hands into his own, rubbing the backs of them till the fingers uncurled.

"You shouldn't have had to take on all those responsibilities at that age to begin with. It's your dad's fault your sisters are the way they are. No matter how badly he was hurting he should've seen that there was at least someone here to help you kids since he couldn't."

"Ranma's only saying the same thing I've been telling you Kasumi," the bespectacled martial artist smiled at his secret fiancée. "Now come on, the tea's getting cold."

On the rooftop Inuyasha stiffened as the tension in the room below suddenly shot strait into orbit, he wasn't sure even Tetsusaiga was powerful enough to cut through it. It all seemed to be centered on the black haired boy with the pig tail.

The boy....

The boy was the one he sought, he was the power source!

Golden eyes feasted hungrily on the young man's lean frame, taking stock of his graceful stride and liquid play of muscles which spoke silently of many long years of training and battle. The young man's power that'd drawn him here sang along the half-demon's nerves, even rigidly controlled and muffled as it was. He had a handsome face and large expressive eyes in a shade of blue Inuyasha had never seen before; at least in a human. He sniffed the breeze, keen nose twitching a bit. Yes, there it was, just barely there. Somewhere in the young man's ancestry lay a demon, the blood so diluted that only one such as himself could hope to discover it.

This revelation only heightened Inuyasha's desires and his body was reacting accordingly. Fire pooled in his groin, member engorged and aching. His musk, the scent of a male demon in heat, danced along the breeze. Thank the Gods the wind was blowing away from the small group below. If the young man had caught so much as a single whiff he'd have been up on the roof fucking Inuyasha raw, unable to resist due to his demon ties. Not that the half demon would've minded that but he preferred to do such things in privacy. Ranma, they called him Ranma. Wild horse, what a fitting name for his mate to possess. Inuyasha sent a silent prayer heavenward that Ranma lived up to his name when they finally joined.

Now that he'd singled out his mate all that was left for Inuyasha to do was lead the young man away from these annoying humans whose raised voices hurt his sensitive ears.

“...you will marry Akane!!” Genma rose, determined to beat his insolent son into submitting. No way was he letting the boy steal away the lazy retirement he’d worked so hard to ensure. Ranma would marry Tendo’s daughter even if they had to perform the ceremony from his hospital room. “No, I’ll not marry someone I don’t love, someone that doesn’t love me, doesn’t trust me.” Ranma shook his head, stance centered and ready for battle. “Akane hates me.”

“It is a matter of family honor.” Soun reminded the boy sounding like a broken record.

“What honor?” Ranma snapped. “Where is the honor in a man who leaves his three young daughters to fend for themselves while he wallows in self pity? Where is the honor when a man sells his son repeatedly into marriage for something so little as a simple bowl of rice!” Blue eyes bore down on the fat martial artist. “How many families did you cheat pop? How many daughters are out there whose family honor you destroyed?”

“Those agreements mean nothing, the schools must be joined, this was decided when you were born!!” The older man tensed, readying himself to leap, only to freeze in place when Ranma pointed a glowing red ball of chi at him.

“By my count there are 33 families, 33 girls who can never regain their honor thanks to your gut.” “That is no way to speak to your father Ranma.” Nodoka said fingering the wrapped katana in her lap.

“I no longer acknowledge him as my father, or you as my mother. I renounce the Saotome name as of this moment.”

For a second everyone was frozen by Ranma’s calmly delivered announcement. Then all hell broke loose!! Ranma however expected this reaction and was well prepared.

Soun and Genma were both woefully below his level and he brushed their unconscious bodies aside. It shouldn’t take only one blow to knock out two masters of the art.

Out of deference that she was his mother Ranma used a single pressure point to knock out his mother without hurting her. Both Kunos went down just as easily. Ukyo he banged the girl on the head with her own spatula then used the weapon to slice Shampoo’s bombori in half.

The Amazon put up a little better fight than the rest and Ranma took some small satisfaction when he broke the girl’s legs. Cologne, with her longer lifespan of experiences, proved more of a challenge but in the end she dropped to the floor out cold besides her Great-Granddaughter. Standing amidst the bodies Ranma faced his final opponents.

“YOU FREAK!! HOW DARE YOU STRIKE MY DADDY!!” Akane pulled out her mallet and charged fully intent on teaching this damned pervert a lesson he’d never forget.

“RANMA SAOTOME, PREPARE TO DIE!!” Ryoga charged in with that same damned threat sounding like a broken record, umbrella held out and ready. “RYU TSUME!”* Ranma’s hand trailed blue chi behind it as he swiped the air before him.

Ryoga’s umbrella shredded into bits and strips of his tattered shirt fell to the floor, tiny lines of red appearing on his chest.

The mallet, the chief player in some of Ranma’s nightmares, crumbled into dust as Akane screamed, falling backwards, arms crossed over her suddenly bare breasts. She could feel blood seeping up from the soft flesh of her bosom.

Before either could recover from their shock Ranma struck, knocking Ryoga out with a combined punch/pressure point and sending Akane into la-la land with a good old fashioned roundhouse punch. In total the fight had only lasted little over a minute.

Ranma stepped over the bodies and grabbed his pack, slinging the thing over one shoulder. As he passed the stunned Nabiki he knocked her out too with another punch. Maybe that was overkill seeing as she wasn’t a martial artist but Ranma felt she deserved it for all the pain she’d caused him since he got here. The middle Tendo sure was going to be pissed with him for hitting her, she’d be even more furious when she found out he’d given evidence of her various illegal activities to Tokyo’s newly created special crimes unit. Dealing with the charges of blackmail, bribery, racketeering, running illegal fights and taking bets on them, destruction of private property, and underage pornography ought to keep her from tracking him down for the highest bidder.

“Don’t worry about the mess Ranma, we’ll clean it up.” Mousse nudged Cologne’s body out of the way as he stepped into the main room.

“Actually we’ll make them clean it up as they’re the ones who made it.” Kasumi actually giggled a

little. "I'm going to miss you two." He hugged each one in turn. "When are you going to be leaving?"

"We've already chosen a nice little apartment near Doctor Tofu." The former Amazon male adjusted his new glasses. As soon as they had enough money saved up he was going in for corrective surgery. "I've already got a job in one of the restaurants as a cook."

"And I'm going to be Doctor Tofu's receptionist."

Ranma felt better knowing his only true friends were going to be getting away from this hellhole soon. "I'll drop in on you then when I get back." "We'll be waiting."

And so the young couple watched from the compound's gate as pig-tailed martial artist disappeared into the city heading for the green countryside. None of them noticed that Ranma had a shadow.

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Inuyasha whined in need as he trailed behind his mate. Dusk was fading into night and finally the young man had stopped to make camp. He'd traveled farther than any normal human should've been able to, putting as much distance between him and his old life as possible with long leaps and changes in direction. They were now in the middle of nowhere, not a single soul for miles around.

Perfect.

Careful not to make a sound, or to release his concealed chi, Inuyasha deliberately placed himself in the wind blowing towards Ranma. His musk would take care of the rest.

The instant the strange scent filled his nostrils Ranma's hormones went into overdrive. He hardened within seconds, his thick organ twitching and leaking, staining the front of his pants. Growling, suddenly too hot, he stripped off his shirt, baring his chest to the campfire's shifting light. Breathing deeper he turned towards where the scent was coming from and gasped as a vision of beauty stepped out of the bushes. Hungrily his eyes feasted on the strange young man's naked body and long silver hair.

A deep whine, filled with need and pain, echoed through the tiny clearing as the newcomer fell to his knees and waved his ass invitingly towards Ranma. Ranma was only too willing and eager to accept the silver-haired boy's invitation.

Soon the forest was filled with loud howls, growls, whines, and the sounds of flesh meeting flesh.

End Notes:

*Ryu Tsume= Dragon claw; slash attack

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 2 by cobalt blue

Imagine, just fourteen days in the wild outskirts of Tokyo and everything he'd ever known about his life had radically altered.

Lying here now beneath the ancient oak's sprawling branches Ranma had time to reflect on the changes which had occurred so quickly. That first time started the ball rolling with the appearance of his silver-haired lover who was at this moment currently sleeping snuggled up against his side.

Their lovemaking that evening had been a little rough.

Correction, their three hour long sexual marathon surpassed every wild fantasy his teenage hormone-spiked mind had ever conjured up. They'd been animals; biting, clawing, howling as they reached release, barely resting five minutes before starting all over again. Waking the following morning Ranma discovered he was sore, covered with dirt, bloody scratches, and cum. Cradled in his arms was an equally disheveled youth with long silver hair and strange dog ears atop his head.

Yelling in panic Ranma spent nearly an hour freaking out, screaming and running wildly about while the clearing's other inhabitant calmly watched him with those magnificent yellow eyes. Ranma finally ran out of steam and collapsed and from there things went a little smoother after they started talking.

Ranma discovered his lover's name was Inuyasha, a half-breed; part human, part dog demon. He sat spellbound as Inuyasha told of his life, weaving a tale filled with demons, vengeful spirits,

time travel, love, betrayal, fierce battles and a quest of a lifetime. There were things Inuyasha left out, skimming over areas that were too painful to talk about just yet but Ranma understood. It wasn't like there were periods in his life that he could speak of easily. When the other youth finished Ranma began his own tale. To an equally enraptured audience the pig-tailed martial artist told of his training years; a time filled with hardships, loneliness, humiliation, and painful beatings. Of being starved and abused by his father, used as a bartering chip to fill the old bastard's bottomless stomach or his pocket.

Inuyasha surprised him when the dog boy began growling when Ranma reached the part about the neko-ken training. Evidently the half demon had heard of this idiotic and dangerous training method before. He wasn't a bit surprised about the cursed springs however and Ranma wondered if he'd ever visited that damned valley. When Ranma reached his time at the Tendos the thought the glade was going to go up in flames. Inuyasha's chi was glowing, the heat leeching from it wilting the surrounding grass. For a moment Ranma actually pitied the Tendos if they ever had the misfortune to meet his love, but only for a moment. Inuyasha swore all but Kasumi would face his vengeance she alone would be spared due to her gentle friendship and aid.

When asked Inuyasha explained about the previous night's carnal events left Ranma a little stunned. Inuyasha was in heat?

Ranma was now his mate??

Thinking about these revelations Ranma's free hand strayed down his own neck, fingers brushing against the newly healed scar there. During that last frenzied bout of sex Inuyasha had bitten him, lapping up the released blood. Not knowing where the need came from Ranma copied his lover's actions. If he focused on it Ranma could still taste the hot red liquid as it filled his mouth; sweet, coppery, tingling with energy. Sliding down his throat to pool in his stomach like a dollop of molten lava.

Ranma became angry then. Once again someone else was deciding his life for him.

Inuyasha was quick to point out, in a noticeably dejected voice, that he didn't have to remain true to him. The mate bond was only binding if both parties agreed to it.

Many times in the past people have described Ranma as totally dense when it came to others emotions and normally this would be the case. But this time was different.

Blue eyes studied the silver-haired youth, taking note of his slumped shoulders, downcast stare, and sad voice.

Consideration was called for here. Several options lay open to him. Perhaps the easiest one was to leave; pack up and put as much distance between him and Inuyasha as possible. But that just wasn't his way.

Staying meant dealing with what happened between them and what might still happen again if he let it. For many months now Ranma had known he was gay, had been really since his twelfth year, but only recently had he accepted that fact. Girls were nothing but trouble, holding no physical appeal to him. A handsome young man however could rev up his hormones in a heartbeat.

Inuyasha was indeed beautiful; a true feast for the eyes, his hybrid state adding a touch of the exotic. Ranma could feel himself getting hard just from studying those slowly twitching ears. He was strong, a great fighter, and both their lives up to this date had held much pain and sorrow. If he gave this a chance Ranma could quite easily fall in love, might've already started if one believed in love at first sight. Much to Inuyasha's delight Ranma agreed to give the bond a chance.

Ranma and Inuyasha had spent these last fourteen days learning more about each other.

They did everything together. Ranma was a better cook but Inuyasha, with his superior senses, was the better hunter, catching much of the meat for their meals. Both boys were evenly matched in skill and delighted in teaching their special moves to each other. Ranma didn't have the correct blood to perform the Hijin Ketsusou* as his lover did but in true Ranma fashion adopted it to suit him. The Sankon Tetsusou* was easier to master it being close to several forms of attack he already knew. Inuyasha took to Ranma's martial arts lessons like a fish to water. Battle was in his blood, honed by years of fighting for his life, and the half demon embraced the Anything Goes style, learning at the same remarkable speed as Ranma displayed in times past.

And then there was the sex.

Sex was definitely a good thing. Sex with Inuyasha was an exceptionally good thing. Absolutely, mind-blowing fantastic if anyone was to ask. The silver-haired boy was so responsive, so delectable in every little move and sound.

At the beginning Ranma knew there was definitely an attraction there between them but the braided youth didn't fully fall in love till just six days ago. He'd just come back from the lake when he spotted his lover.

Sunlight spilled down through the thick foliage to pool around Inuyasha's naked kneeling form, his silver mane shimmering as the breeze lifted the silken strands. His skin glowed, warm and soft, ears twitching, listening to the various woodland sounds. Breathtaking didn't even come close to describing the sight.

And that was the moment Ranma truly fell in love. A twitch from the body besides him drew Ranma out of his thoughts. Inuyasha was waking up.

Golden eyes opened, blinking away the night's sleep. "Good morning." Ranma smiled at his mate.

"Morning," came the soft reply before their lips met. The kiss was slow and tender, lips moving, tongues dancing lazily about each other. Fortunately Inuyasha's heat had faded away three days ago leaving the two to experience their love outside of sex. Cuddling was one thing they surprisingly both enjoyed.

"Maybe we should take a bath."

Inuyasha sniffed and made a face. "We do kinda stink don't we?"

"Yep, let's go. Maybe we can catch some fish while we're at it." The pig tailed boy helped his lover up and together, hand in hand, they walked down to the lake. Washing was a leisurely affair, hands rubbing, most of the time stroking rather than scrubbing. "Do you really have to leave today?" The black-haired boy asked, a note of sadness in his voice.

Inuyasha rested his head against Ranma's shoulder. "Have to," his ears drooped. "There's still shards to recover. Kagome's bound to be mad about this, she's gonna sit me for sure, probably a whole lotta sits." Ranma's chest reverberated with his deep angry growl. How he hated that damned string of beads about his lover's neck! Though not quite as much as he hated the bitch who held power over those beads.

"If only I could break this," his fingers twisted the beads between his fingers.

"Nobody can 'cept Kagome, and she's not gonna do it."

"Maybe she would, given a little persuasion." A fiery glint appeared deep in Ranma's blue eyes. One of the things Ranma had changed about himself was his refusal to hit girls. Thanks to his various fiancées violet natures he could no longer consider girls weak. In truth females were often more vicious than the males. Ryoga, Tarou, and the other males he'd fought were arrogant and most of the times fought underhandedly but they didn't try half the tricks the girls did. Akane especially set out to deliberately maim, most of Kodachi's drugs had terrible, even fatal, side-effects if used as heavily as she did, Ukyo's sharpened spatula could take off a limb with little effort, and Shampoo's methods to capture him had left long lasting scars which even his healing powers couldn't completely remove.

"Nice as it'd be to see the others would be angry." He sighed as he began nuzzling his mate's neck. "Can we..one last time?"

Inuyasha didn't have to ask, Ranma's hands had already begun to caress his body, paying special attention to his mate's erogenous zones. Fingers wove through his hair to find the base of his ears, rubbing in a slow circular motion. Inu's back arched, a deep groan of desire filtered up from his chest.

Ranma made love to his mate on the shore. Stretched out on their towels the black-haired boy paid worship to his lover's exquisite body, sensitizing every inch of flesh with repeated touches from his fingers, tongue, and lips, tasting the sweet drops that welled up from the tiny slit. Groans and gasps, music to his ears, rose and fell in time to his rhythmic thrusts, sinking deep again and again into the tightest, hottest place he'd ever been. They prolonged this blissful joining as long as they could but nothing good lasts forever and all too soon the forests rang with their climactic screams.

"I think.." Ranma gasped. "We need another bath." Inuyasha blinked and began laughing along

with his mate.

Tying the kimono's belt Ranma smoothed the red fabric along Inuyasha's shoulders, reluctant to stop touching his mate, reluctant to let go.

Inuyasha seemed equally reluctant, golden eyes gazing deep into his lover's sapphire blue eyes, fingers carding through the thick black hair.

"I don't want you to go," Ranma whispered hoarsely, a lone tear slipping down his cheek. "I just found you." "I don't wanna leave," Inu's silver head came to rest on the other boy's shoulder. "But I have to. They need me. Naraku's too dangerous for them to handle on their own. Besides, the bastard's responsible for me spending 50 years pinned to a tree with an arrow through my chest." Ranma understood. "Okay, you have to go. But you'll be coming back right?"

The smile that graced Inuyasha's face was so beautiful it made Ranma's heart melt all over again. "They couldn't keep me away even if they sealed the well with an entire mountain."

"Dr. Tofu's clinic is only three blocks from the Higuarshi shrine. I'll check in with Sota and his mother." Ranma knew those two liked his mate and would keep him updated when Kagome came and went through the well.

"Don't forget the old priest." Kagome's grandfather would never forgive Inuyasha if he didn't have Ranma speak to him as well. "Just watch out for his mouth, there's a story for everything in the shrine and he'll tell every single one of them."

"Right, don't allow the old man to ramble," chuckled the braided boy before his face took on a sad somber expression. "I'll miss you...miss you already."

"You could come with me," begged the red-garbed youth, longing etched in every inch of his lean frame.

"Can't," regrettably Ranma shook his head. "I have to stay. I gotta learn more control so I won't hurt anyone, so I won't ever hurt you."

"I understand." And Inuyasha did understand he just didn't like it. But he'd never force Ranma to do anything. That would be the surest way to drive his mate away; by forcing Ranma he'd be no better than those bastards back in Nerima.

"You'd better go," Ranma forced himself to pull away. "Yeah, but first hold out your hand." Ranma did so and Inuyasha handed him something long and...silver? "You..your hair," he breathed, running his fingers along the tight braid lovingly. Inuyasha had cut off a lock of his long silver hair and worked it into this shimmering rope. The ends were tied together, the knot sealed with what looked like a drop of blood, to form a necklace.

"So you'll always have something of me with you." Talon tipped fingers closed Ranma's hand around his gift.

"But I do have you with me. You're in my blood, my heart and soul."

"Wear it for me."

Faced with such a heartfelt plea Ranma silently slipped the braid around his neck, feeling the warmth of it against his bare skin.

One last embrace, one deep kiss, lingering over the connection between their bodies, before Inuyasha backed away and bounded off back towards Tokyo. A suddenly desolate Ranma left alone in the clearing behind him.

⇒ ⇒ ⇒

"Oh! Where is he!!" Kagome fumed as she paced angrily before the well house. "First he can't stand me staying here for even a DAY and now he runs off somewhere for TWO WEEKS!!" Not that she really minded the two weeks in modern time, it gave her time to get caught up on her studies and see her friends. That didn't mean she'd forgotten about her responsibilities. The Shikon jewel was still incomplete and so long as there was a single shard unaccounted for Kagome had to return to the past. Besides she missed her friends there; Sango, Shippou, Kirara, Kaede, and even that groping lecher Miroku. Off to the left movement caught her eye. A flash of red and silver.

Inuyasha was back.

He landed just feet away from her, standing there watching her with those gold eyes of his.

"Kagome.."

"SIT!"

WHAM!! Down went the half demon face first into the paving.

"WHAT'D YOU DO THAT FOR YOU STUPID GI-"

"SIT! SIT SIT!!"

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM!

"Where'd you run off to?? For two weeks you've been gone!" She stood over him, rage clearly etched on her face.

"None of your damn business!" Leaping to his feet Inuyasha snarled right back at her.

"SIT!"

WHAM!!

"Dammit!" He groaned, rising unsteadily to his feet. "Stop that! Let's just go down the well and get back to the others." And with that he stormed past and down the steps, hopping into the well and back in time. "I am going to find out where he was, even if I have to sit him a hundred times." She grumbled, slinging her pack over one shoulder, before following the half demon.

Tbc

*Hijin Ketsusou= Claws of blood, attack of Inuyasha's, uses his own blood to form blades to hurl at his enemies.

*Sankon Tetsusou= Claws of steel, attack of Inuyasha's, can be anything from a blade to tearing up an opponent.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 3 by cobalt blue

Normally people don't usually break out laughing when they read a newspaper's headlines so when the handsome young man at the counter's end began laughing the store owner and several customers turned to stare.

Having exhausted some of his supplies Ranma had reluctantly returned to civilization to restock. The small mountain village was perfect; out of the way of normal traffic yet connected enough to receive merchandise and news from the bigger cities. The little grocery store Ranma found had everything he needed and then some. Tossing the last item on his list into the cart the black-haired boy headed towards the checkout. By chance his eyes spotted the latest edition of Tokyo's biggest newspaper on the counter.

Snatching it up he read, and then reread, the headlines before starting to laugh for the first time since his mate left.

~*~*~*~ BIG SCANDAL IN NERIMA DISTRICT!! ~*~*~*~

In an early morning raid Nabiki Tendo, the so called "Ice Queen of Furinkan High" was arrested along with several others at the Nerima residence.

Moving on an anonymous tip Tokyo's recently formed Special Crimes Unit began investigating the strange goings on in the Nerima District which has until very recently been a martial arts battle zone of epic proportions. While under surveillance Miss Tendo was observed engaging in numerous and highly illegal activities both on school grounds and in the surrounding residential and business areas. During one day alone Miss Tendo was seen engaged in acts of blackmail, extortion, and selling photos of nude or semi-nude underage girls.

When police arrived to place Miss Tendo under arrest several officers were assaulted by her father and younger sister.

Akane Tendo, age 17, was already under investigation after several families in the area filed charges against the girl. Evidently the youngest Tendo has a severe and violent hatred of boys and almost daily ritual beats a large group of boys each morning.

Recently this school ritual has become dark as Miss Akane had taken to brutally beating her possible boyfriends and several boys have wound up in the hospital with serious injuries. Soun Tendo, father of both girls who retired from teaching his family's style after his wife's death, attempted to stop his daughter's arrest.

Due to his lack of practice Mr. Tendo was easily dealt with. Miss Akane Tendo proved a bit more

difficult as she pulled out a large mallet and beat two officers before being brought down by tazers.

Screaming obscenities the youngest Tendo finally had to be sedated before being loaded for transport.

Police are still at this moment conducting a thorough search of the Tendo residence to gather further evidence.

Captain Misato has stated that this case is one of the most disturbing cases he has ever run across in his entire career.

"It's truly horrifying. The evidence we have gathered so far is only the barest tip of the iceberg. I feel that Miss Tendo's illegal dealings are far more sinister and depraved than we were first led to believe."

The sole remaining Tendo, the oldest daughter Kasumi, moved out of the Tendo residence two weeks earlier.

According to neighbors Kasumi Tendo has been a virtual slave to her father and sibling since her mother died, performing all the chores around the house. Miss Kasumi was unavailable for comment as she has severed all contact with her family.

Charges are pending against all three Tendos and will also be leveled against the unknown man who escaped as soon as he is identified.

~~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Still laughing Ranma paid for his supplies and left, quickly making his way out of the quiet village to the sheltering woods beyond. He promised himself though that he'd come back again soon to see what else the papers might print about the Tendos' well deserved plight.

In the last few weeks since Inuyasha's departure Ranma had been training harder than he'd ever done before. In the past Ranma's goal had always been to be the best martial artist ever.

Eventually, due to his father's greed and stupidity, the need to find his curse's cure and a way out of his many engagements had complicated that original goal. No matter how hard he tried however the pig-tailed boy only managed to keep from sinking deeper into the black pit of despair and madness that had become his life. If it hadn't been for him casting aside his previous life and meeting Inuyasha Ranma had little doubt he would've eventually snapped and seriously injured, if not killed, one or more of the people around him.

Inuyasha.

Ranma couldn't wait to see his mate again. By day he trained, working his mind and body to the breaking point, but at night his dreams were filled with the memories of their brief time together. Keeping his promise Ranma had discreetly visited the Higurashi Shrine and met with Kagome's family. The girl's mother was surprisingly nice, not at all what he was expecting. She supported her daughter's dangerous mission and went out of her way to see that Kagome had everything she needed to complete it. When the woman discovered that the Shrine's mysterious visitor was a friend of Inuyasha's she welcomed him with open arms and lots of questions, almost as many as Sota asked. Kagome's brother had a big case of hero worship going when it came to Inuyasha and anyone the half-demon called friend was okay in his book. Grandfather however took a bit more time to win over. The old coot first thought he was a demon and tried to banish him with a lot of poorly drawn seals. Really, Ranma himself could've drawn better ones. It was only after he'd beaten and run off a band of punks who were harassing visitors to the Shrine did the old man relent and welcomed Ranma.

His visits weren't very long, only a day to two each time, the rest being spent in the forests preparing for the most dangerous part of his training. It didn't matter if he mastered every form of martial arts in the world, so long as the neko-ken remained uncontrolled in his body he was a danger to himself and everyone around him. This was his ultimate goal, the one that drove him onwards.

So to protect those he loved from himself and others he must master the neko-ken.

###

Climbing down from the thick canopy above Inuyasha reluctantly rejoined the group, Kirara and Myoga immediately falling into place besides him. Their actions certainly had been curious since

his return from Kagome's time but the half-demon paid little attention, his mind focused on other matters.

Ranma. His mate. Memories of their brief time together filled his head, soothing the hollow ache in his heart. Fourteen days were hardly enough time for them and Inuyasha swore he'd return to Ranma as soon as possible.

Being demons themselves Shippo, Myoga, and Kirara noticed the difference in Inuyasha almost immediately.

Shippo was too young to understand; all he knew was that the white-haired boy's scent had changed. It drew him, this new smell, awakened some deeply hidden need to protect his older friend however ludicrous it sounded. If either of them needed protection it would be Shippo himself, the fox demon was far too young to survive against the dangerous foes they faced alone. When he attempted to question his companions about these feelings Sango looked confused while Miroku just said Inuyasha had probably taken a bath with those strangely smelling soaps that Kagome raved about.

Myoga, who'd known Inuyasha's father and understood the family's bloodline, remained oddly silent. He'd abandoned his previous tendency to flee at the first hint of danger, clinging now to his Lord with an almost fanatical zeal. Twice now the flea demon had leapt to Inuyasha's defense, saving the half demon's life when he unexpectedly faltered in battle.

Only Kirara, the two tailed cat demon, made no such attempts to be secretive or confused. Like a mother with one lone kitten she doted on the boy; constantly checking on where he was, defending him, and seeing to his needs. The others thought it was funny, joking that the cat demon had taken a fancy to the half demon and was trying to woo him with her attention and gifts.

Kagome and the rest of the crew were deeply shocked the first time Kirara laid a plump rabbit at the boy's feet, nudging it forwards. They damn near fell off the rocks they were setting on when the half demon not only accepted the gift but ate it as well, making quick work of the sweet flesh. Most confusing of all however was the cat's reaction to Kagome. Before they'd returned from the future Kirara and Kagome got along well, now she barely tolerated the girl. The closer Kagome got to the half demon the thinner that tolerance was worn down. She'd even snapped at the girl in warning once.

"I just don't get it. What's wrong with Kirara?"

Sango shook her head in confusion. The group, minus Inuyasha and his pair of guardians, were setting around the campfire discussing the recent changes amongst them.

"Don't forget the flea." Kagome reminded her friend. "Myoga's gone and grown himself a backbone all of the sudden."

"Indeed," agreed the monk as he blew on his tea to cool it. "He has remained by Inuyasha's side ever since his return from the future."

"Did something happen while you were home Kagome?"

The future girl looked at her dear friend. "Not that I know of. But then we didn't see that much of each other. Inuyasha disappeared for two weeks. You know he never did tell me where he'd ran off to or why he stayed away for so long."

"Maybe he got injured or something," Shippo piped in from his favorite perch atop Kagome's backpack. "That would explain why he smells so different."

"But why hide an injury for this long? Any injury his fast healing ability wouldn't take care in a couple of days would be too serious to hide. We would've seen something by now." Miroku lost himself in thought as he spoke, mentally running over the last three weeks in his head for some clue.

"Why's his smell so important Shippo? So long as he doesn't stink what's the difference?"

"A demon's scent is, like with animals, an indicator of their health, clan, and even sexual state." Explained the demon exterminator. "If Inuyasha's scent truly has changed and remained so then it can't be those soaps of yours Kagome. I really doubt he's injured, I think he might be sick. He has been a little slow lately."

"And sleepy." Miroku added.

"And..um..I saw.." Shippo hesitated to speak out loud. Some instinct was screaming at him to

remain silent but it was a little too late for that.

"Shippo.."

"Okay, okay. I saw him throwing up yesterday, and a couple of times before that." The boy fiddled with the tip of his tail.

"Throwing up? He must be sick then." Kagome nibbled on her fingernails in thought. "But why would he have that fancy glow if he's only sick."

"Glow?" Miroku leaned forwards to peer at the now sleeping demon. He saw no glow but then Kagome did possess powers he did not fully understand. "Can you describe it Kagome?"

"You mean you don't see it? It's very soft and kinda pretty; all golden like. Makes me feel, I don't know..kinda protective if that makes any sense."

A trickle of memory teased the monk's mind, something that he'd heard about during his travels. But strain as he might it eluded his grasp. "I think it would be best if we return to the village. Lady Kaede will certainly know what to do about this."

Sango nodded. "I agree. We're not that far away. If we start early we could be there by midday tomorrow."

"Let's get some sleep then!" Shippo bounded over to where Kagome's sleeping bag was laid out, burrowing underneath its warm top. How he loved the marvelous things from Kagome's time; so useful and comfortable, not to mention all those yummy sweets she brought back for him.

Shifting, Inuyasha curled up against Kirara's warm belly fur. Here he felt safe, felt loved. Kirara purred, swishing her tails around to cover her companion and protect her against the night chills. Kirara had lived a long, long time, witness and at times participant in many of life's wonders and its horrors. Times of battle, times of peace, buried old friends long gone and made new ones with whom she now traveled with. There were a few years when she'd dallied a bit and produced a litter or two. Sometimes Kirara wondered if any of her dear kittens still lived. It was a harsh world, fraught with many dangers. Who knew what her children might've faced once they left the shelter of their mother's territory. Maybe once this quest was over she'd seek out news of her young. Yes, she'd do just that, just as soon as she saw to this one.

So lost and alone he was. Despite the others friendship he still stood apart. And now he was more alone than ever. Humans had different views of things than demons did. Once they learned of Inuyasha's growing secret there was no telling how they might react. As one of the few demons in this band, and one who considered herself to be the dog-hybrid's friend, it was up to her to see Inuyasha was treated right.

Near her shoulder pale fur lifted and moved. A tiny head popped out followed soon by the rest of the body.

"He's asleep Kirara," the tiny demon hopped over to his Lord's shoulder. "I don't know how long he can keep this pace up."

Kirara rumbled her agreement.

"I worry what the others will think, this certainly isn't normal for their kind."

She agreed with this too.

"Lord Inuyasha will begin showing soon I think." Two sets of eyes trailed down to the half demon's stomach.

###

Morning arrived all too soon and Inuyasha was informed of the decision made last evening to return to the village. Naturally, to them anyway, he was upset and was quite vocal about it. Strange that, Kagome didn't even try to sit him as she usually did for his use of foul language, the beads remained unused. If only they knew that inside he was bouncing with joy. The sooner they returned to the village the sooner he could travel through the well to see Ranma again.

He had to put up a fight of course. If Inuyasha didn't resist they would've thought something was wrong. Kagome huffed, shouted, and finally resorted to pleading for Inuyasha to agree. Evidently they were worried about him for some reason, concerned because of his recent actions. Secretly he was concerned as well. Inuyasha knew there was something wrong with him. Never in his whole life had he ever been sick.

Injuries he'd had aplenty, wounds from simple fights to desperate battles for survival. But this

fatigue, the queasy stomach, it was unknown to him.

Grumbling in disgust, complaining the whole time, Inuyasha followed along behind the others.

As the day passed Kagome kept glancing back towards the half-demon. About an hour into their journey Inuyasha had begun to lag behind. Upon seeing this Kirara immediately trotted back and badgered the white haired boy till he mounted her. Once she was sure her rider was comfortably settled before falling back in behind the rest of the group. The only time she allowed Inuyasha to leave her broad back was when they stopped for a rest.

(I really hope it's not serious.) She fretted silently.

It was the children's excited shouts that roused the old priestess Kaede from her meditations. Peering outside her door her one eye widened when she saw the returning group. Surely they had not succeeded in gathering the remaining shards already.

"Kagome, child what brings yea back so soon?" She greeted the future girl.

But it wasn't Kagome who answered her but Miroku. The dark garbed priest pulled the old woman aside and spoke to her in whispered tones. All those who were watching the pair were startled to see Kaede suddenly begin shaking, skin blanching almost as white as her robe top.

"Surely this cannot be," her voice was barely above a whisper.

"I believe it is." Miroku's eyes drifted over to where Inuyasha still sat astride Kirara's large form. Together the pair headed for the two demons.

"What ails thee Inuyasha?" The old priestess asked softly.

Wearily the golden eyes opened and focused on her wrinkled features. "I don't know."

"Come child, let us go inside and I will take a look."

She didn't expect the half-demon to obey her so readily. It was a testament to how serious this was that Inuyasha merely nodded in agreement. Kirara bent down to make his dismount easier and transforming into her smaller form followed the pair inside.

"Lay down Inuyasha."

Since he was tired the silver haired boy did as she asked. He flinched as her hands touched him, pressing and poking.

"Careful you old hag." He snapped, showing some of his unusual personality.

"Quiet Inuyasha and let me work."

"You call this work? Feels more like torture to me."

He grumbled.

"Quiet."

Kaede continued on with her examination, bringing into play her priestess skills along with those of healing. Strange, her questing hands could feel a slight mound where none should be nestled low within his stomach. Surely it wasn't what it felt like, after all Inuyasha was a man despite his demon heritage. Or perhaps it was because of his mixed blood that this was possible. Who knew what such a mating could produce in the offspring. Calling her magical training into play Kaede probed. Within seconds she jerked back as if burned.

"It cannot be..It cannot.." She gasped; sweat breaking out upon her brow.

"What can't be you old woman?" Inuyasha raised himself up on his elbows to stare at her.

"Inuyasha..yea are..yea.."

"Just spit it out Kaede." He snarled, baring sharp white fangs.

"Yea are..with..child Inuyasha."

"With..child?" Gold eyes blinked owlshly.

"Yea are pregnant Inuyasha."

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 4 by cobalt blue

Kaede waited, with her remaining eye tightly squeezed shut, for the inevitable explosion.

Surely Inuyasha would be furious. Ever the prideful warrior the half demon would no doubt be vehemently opposed to the idea of carrying a child. Having babies was something girls do and he most certainly wasn't a girl.

Reluctantly her mind went over her current stock of herbs. After he recovered from his initial

shock probably the first thing out of his mouth would be an angry demand she abort the child. It wasn't something Kaede as a priestess normally did; her reverence for life wouldn't allow to perform such a task lightly. But what else could she do? If she refused Inuyasha would no doubt find some other way to rid his body of its unwelcome tenant. Better for her to do it than allow the half demon to mangled and possibly killed at the hands of some idiot healer.

A single tear threatened to spill from her lone eye. Already she mourned for the loss of this tiny life.

"I'm..pregnant..?" Inuyasha's voice was surprisingly soft and..tender?

"A-a-aye." She stuttered, watching a tiny smile blossom on his face.

Clawed hands settled protectively over his still flat stomach.

Pregnant, he was pregnant. Hidden within his belly was a small speck of life, something he and Ranma had created together.

Their child, a mingling of Ranma and himself. Closing his eyes he wondered over the possibilities. What traits would their child share? Would it inherit his silver or Ranma's magnificent raven locks? His golden eyes or that wondrous sparkling blue? And what powers would the pup inherit? The combinations were too numerous for him to guess correctly.

They would just have to wait till he or she was born to discover the answers to those questions.

Ranma would be ecstatic. He could just see that handsome face sporting a grin larger than anything, laughing and hugging his mate. The pigtailed boy would be such a great father and Inuyasha himself would be a good mother. Yes, he was carrying the pup so he was the mother. He'd be a great mother, his memories of his own mother and friends would guide him.

So lost in his blissful thoughts Inuyasha failed to notice Kaede's undignified retreat.

###

The villagers and Kagome's group alike were startled when the elderly priestess tumbled out of her own hut.

"Kaede!" The future girl scrambled to help the older woman to her feet and over to a nearby seat. "Why are you so pale? You're shaking!"

"Is Inuyasha all right?" The little fox demon asked worriedly.

"Give her a moment Shippo, let Lady Kaede compose herself." The monk stepped closer and knelt beside the old priestess.

Gulping down the water one villager kindly offered her Kaede studied the concerned faces surrounding her. "Inuyasha's condition is most serious indeed."

Miroku's unwarded hand came to rest on her red robed knee. "Is it what I suspected?"

"Aye, it is."

The young man sighed and sat down, staff resting across his lap. "What was his reaction to this news or have you told him yet?"

"I have told him. His reaction was not what I expected." Her hands shook as she finished her

drink.

"Is there a cure?" Sango was half afraid to ask, fearing to hear there was nothing they could do to help their companion and friend.

"Only time," the old priestess replied softly. How were these youngsters going to take this news she didn't know. Kaede only prayed they would at least refrain from hurting the boy should they react badly.

"How much time are we talking about here?" Kagome joined the monk. "A few days? A week?"

"Months."

"MONTHS???" The school girl frowned, staring at the building where the half demon lay resting. "That's just great! Now how are we supposed to hunt for Naraku and the shards with stupid dog boy laid up?"

"Kagome!!" Kaede's voice was sharp. "Behave child."

Under the old woman's admonishment Kagome fell silent.

"This illness, what is it Priestess?" The village leader asked nervously. "Is it contagious?"

"Nay, worry yea not about young Inuyasha's condition spreading. Unless yea wishes for a larger family." She mumbled the last part so low he couldn't hear her as she waved him back into the crowd.

"You still haven't told us what Inuyasha's got Lady Kaede," Sango pointed out. "Maybe if we knew what we're dealing with we could search for a quicker cure."

At this Kagome's spirits perked up. Of course! Why didn't she think of that??

Medicine in her age was far advanced over the crude stuff they used here. Most of the time the villagers relied more on ritual prayer than on the various herbs and brews Kaede worked with. Once she knew what Inuyasha had picked up Kagome could just pop down the well, collect his cure, and return to the past. The white haired boy would be cured and up on his feet in no time!

Eagerly she leaned forwards so as not to miss a single spoken word.

"No, Inuyasha will not accept any cure. He wishes to see this illness through to its end."

"What? Why would Inuyasha wanna stay sick?" Shippo was really confused now and he wasn't the only one.

"Lady Kaede what exactly is Inuyasha's illness?"

Kaede sat the empty cup down. "Inuyasha is with child."

Dead silence filled the air; even the nearby birds had ceased their calling.

"Eh Kaede? I don't think I heard you right. Did you just say Inuyasha's pregnant?" Asked Kagome nervously, fearing the old woman had finally gone senile.

"Indeed. Inuyasha is with child."

"B-b-bb-but that's impossible!!!"

"Perhaps for a human but you recall Inuyasha's part demon." Sango nodded to herself. Their friend's symptoms made sense now.

"It is a rare among the demon races." Miroku explained. "I remember hearing stories about such conceptions but never thought to see one myself."

"Wow! Inuyasha's really gonna have a baby?" Shippo's fluffy tail was bouncing eagerly.

"Yes Shippo."

"Yeah! I can be a big brother!!" skipping around excitedly the young demon was unaware how this stunning revelation was affecting his friends.

Both Kaede and Miroku wore masked expressions, their minds focusing on the daunting tasks ahead of them.

Due to his hybrid nature Inuyasha's pregnancy would not be normal by either race's standards. Neither the monk nor the priestess knew much, if anything, about demon pregnancies and only Kaede had an understanding about human ones; but her knowledge came from dealing with pregnant women not men. They feared for the half demon, feared that because of their lack of knowledge both Inuyasha and his child might suffer an untimely death.

Shippo was ecstatic. The little orphan demon, having no living blood relatives, had adopted the group as his surrogate family. Now there was to be an addition to that family and the fox demon couldn't wait. There was so much he could teach the kit, so many tricks and skills, everything he or she'd need to survive.

Being a demon exterminator Sango had spent years tracking and killing lesser demons who threatened humans. Because of the trickery of Naraku all her kin were dead, leaving the girl alone to grieve and seek revenge. That two of her companions were demons and one a half demon didn't bother her much as she'd learned that not all demons were evil. But for Inuyasha to be pregnant, to be carrying an infant..something..what was she to make of this?

For Kagome matters were very complicated and confusing. Ever since she'd been dragged down the well into the past and into this great mission Kagome had relied on Inuyasha. The half demon had provided the muscle in their attempts to regain the scattered shards, taking on monsters and demons they couldn't handle. With Inuyasha knocked up he was virtually useless. Then there was this thing between them. At first Kagome thought Inuyasha might have feelings for her as she did for him. But after all the time they'd spent together the half demon never made a single move. Now there was proof that whatever feelings Inuyasha's heart might harbor for her it wasn't the love that grew between a man and a woman.

She didn't know whether to be angry or relieved.

Around them the villagers were confused and frightened. They couldn't understand how a male could come to be pregnant.

Broken from her thoughts Sango stood up and looked around. "Where's Myoga? Only he and Kirara seemed to know what was going on before we did."

"I am here," Myoga hopped up onto Miroku's shoulder. "Kirara remains with Lord Inuyasha."

"You know what's going on here flea, so you'd better start talking." Growled the school girl.

The tiny demon looked around. "Let us go somewhere more private first and I will explain about

the blood of the Kodomo Ga Umeru."

###

The flickering fire cast eerie shadows on the walls of one of the village's guest houses. Everyone was seated and waiting for the flea to speak.

Myoga began, his voice clear and steady. "It began many ages ago, long before humans were so plentiful. A great war broke out amongst the Gods and Demon clans. Huge battles were waged upon the earth, ravaging the lands and changing them forever; oceans boiled, deserts consumed once fertile fields, and high mountains crumbled. The blood soaked earth was littered with the lifeless bodies of the slain and air choked with moans from the wounded. The war raged for a thousand years before a truce was finally called. The Gods retreated to their celestial palaces to heal and mourn and the Demons remained here on earth to lick their wounds and bury their dead. Many of the clans suffered heavy losses, some so diminished in numbers their kind were threatened with forever fading from this world. Desperately the clans pooled their magic and cast a mighty spell, one so strong it has yet to weaken. Clan males were made fertile, able to bear offspring as well as sire them. With this gift the endangered demons began to rebuild their numbers till they were once again proud and powerful. The Fox, Wolf, Cat, Dog, and Fire Demons retain this trait even to today."

"Dog. So Inuyasha's dad carried the trait." Kagome rubbed her chin in thought. "Did he ever have any kids?"

Shaking his head Myoga replied. "Lord Inutaishou never bore a child himself. Lord Sesshoumaru's mother was another male Dog Demon of high standing. He died just before Sesshoumaru reached his 9th year."

"That means that Sesshoumaru can get knocked up too. That's a nasty thought." The future girl shook her head to dispel the images that random thought had generated.

"This will be a time of great peril for Lord Inuyasha. In his gravid state he will be unable to defend himself as he has in times past. It falls to us to see to his and the child's safety."

"That means we have to lay off the search," Kagome huffed. "How long before he pops the kid out?"

"A human pregnancy lasts nine months while a demon's only five. With Inuyasha being a mix of both there is no telling how long he will carry the child before he delivers." The Priestess nodded in agreement with Miroku's words.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 5 by cobalt blue

All around him a tempest raged.

Fierce winds tore through the trees, breaking the thrashing branches, stripping the deep green leaves. Bright flashes of lightening illuminated the rolling black clouds above, each resulting thunderclap loud enough to shatter glass if there was some. Heavy rain pelted down, stinging bare skin with the force of its impact.

Whipped into a frenzy by the howling storm the low bushes edges the trail lashed about, braches cutting through cloth and skin alike.

But no matter how violently the storm threatened Ranma he refused to give up. Onwards he trudged, straining against the gale, eyes fixed upon his ultimate destination.

Close...so very close.

For ten days straight he'd been fasting, refusing all offers of food from Kagome's well meaning family, allowing only a few sips of precious water to pass his lips as he prepared for his toughest battle to date.

Sinking deep into a meditative state Ranma's conscious plunged inwards searching for the elusive Neko Ken. Farther and farther he delved, reaching out with his senses till at last he found the mental den in which the dreaded technique dwelt.

But finding the Neko Ken was only the beginning of his task. His next hurdle lay in reaching the beast to confront it.

His own mind was proving to be his greatest obstacle. In an effort to protect Ranma's sanity his subconscious had formed amazingly strong mental barriers to shield him from the worst of the dark insanity the unleashed Neko Ken produced. The storm raging around him was just his interpretation of those barriers.

Just a little farther now...

Like stepping through a doorway into another room the change was immediate, the sudden cessation of the tempest Ranma had struggled against for so long made the young man stumble.

Where before he was in a lush forest Ranma now found himself standing in a barren rocky hollow at the far end of which lay the mouth of a large cave. Faint wisps of steam drifted up from cracks amidst the boulders, their sulfuric stench tainting the chilly air.

A deep rumbling growl echoed from the cave's fathomless depths, two glowing red eyes filled with hate and bloodlust grew larger as their owner advanced towards the entrance.

Ranma felt the first tremors of fear shake his limbs. One hand drifted up on its own accord to touch the silver braid hanging about his neck and his resolve strengthened. Ranma would not fail; he would conquer the Neko Ken.

For his future..

For Inuyasha....

&&&

"Do you think Ranma's all right Grandpa?" Sota asked the old temple priest.

The old man sighed. "We must have patience Sota. What that young man is trying to do is not something that is accomplished quickly or easily."

"Is there any way we can help him?" The young boy pleaded.

"No, he must do this alone." And with that he walked away before his grandson could see the fear and frustration reflected in his features. What Ranma was trying to do was something only the most accomplished priests, with decades of study and training, could hope to succeed at. The risks of failure were huge, one wrong move and he could quite easily lose himself in his own mind or wipe out his personality entirely.

If it were anyone else who'd come to the temple asking for sanctuary during his inner quest the old priest would've turned him away. But Ranma was special. In the boy he sensed a power the likes of which he'd never before encountered, power that Ranma had barely begun to tap. The feats the boy had accomplished so far in his life were amazing; mastering chi, besting one of the

oldest Amazon elders, defeating the Musk Prince Herb, and killing the insane immortal Phoenix God Saffron.

After only the third time meeting this unique young man the old priest knew what he was. Ranma was a Legendary Hero like those of spoke of their people's legends and mythology. Whether it was his fortune or misfortune to be born in this modern age was unknown to the old priest. But one thing he did know; whatever happened in the coming weeks and months would be passed down through tales for generations to come.

As the old man pondered the young martial artist lying on the floor of the sealed room moaned, a thin trickle of blood seeping from one nostril.

&&&

Ranma surged to feet, ignoring the loud protests his body was making, and turned to face his opponent.

The battle had been joined shortly after Ranma entered the Neko Ken's barren sanctuary, pitting human teen against massive black feline. And while the cat's ebony flanks showed signs of damage from Ranma's attacks it was the martial artist who had suffered greater injury. Despite all his training, all the foes he'd faced and defeated, the incredible power of the Neko Ken in its truest form was greater than Ranma had ever imagined. His clothing was no longer recognizable as such, lying in ragged shreds against his bruised and lacerated skin, remnants streaked with blood and dirt. The only thing completely untouched on Ranma's body was Inuyasha's hair necklace. The fine silver strands shone in the dim light like a beacon in the night.

Ranma was tiring and he knew it, worse he knew the black beast had noticed it too. Here on this mental plane the limits against physical exertion meant little thus allowing Ranma far greater freedom of movement so long as he had the will to use it. The battle was brutal, neither side holding back, tearing into each other with fierce determination. But fatigue was beginning to wear Ranma's will down and if nothing happened to change the course of this fight...

No, he refused to give up, refused to give in. He would win, he had to win!!

&&&

The Neko Ken growled, crouched down and ready to pounce. Finally it would seize the body denied it for so long. It would be free of this boring prison, able to roam and destroy at whim. Once the human's mind was shredded the walls around this place would fall and the black beast would be free and the first thing it intended to do was kill the bitch who'd managed to placate it before. There would be no more purring in some girl's lap, no more being forced back into this hellhole till the next time someone loaded the boy down with cats. Once the girl was dead it would deal with those other idiots. Bloodshed, carnage, and mayhem would rule!!

Just as he was about to pounce a feline roar was heard, only slightly smaller in volume. A black and white blur shot out from behind a boulder, placing itself directly between the Neko Ken and its prey.

Red eyes narrowed in rage. He was here, its nemesis, its jailer, the bane of its entire existence!!!



&&&

"What? Where'd the cat come from?" Ranma asked. He watched as the cat walked stiff legged towards the Neko Ken, growling deep in its throat, placing itself in a defensive position between Ranma and the black beast. It was clear from the two cats' attitude that this wasn't the first time the two had faced off against each other. And if the black and white cat was an enemy of the

Neko Ken that made it a potential ally of Ranma's.

With renewed hope and determination Ranma sprang back into battle with a sharp battle cry, keenly aware of his new leaping ally's fierce roar.

&&&

Hariken   "hurricane; a force of nature.

A wild uncontrollable storm that knew no boundaries and no mortal force on earth could ever hope to restrain. For thirteen seasons the black and white tom had lived up to that name before the fat cruel human had grabbed him.

Before that evil day he'd been so much more than a simple house pet to his beloved family. He'd been their friend, confidant, consoler, and protector. Secure in the knowledge her children were safe the mother would tend to the house chores while Hariken watched over her two sons. It was a task that Hariken accepted willingly, even eagerly. Humans fascinated him so!! They were so much like his own kind's young; innocent and inquisitive.

Her trust was well founded. Countless praise was heaped onto his furry head when he brought down the child snatcher who'd been working the city's rural areas. When the mind sick human attempted to abscond with one of his charges Hariken became a storm of fang and claws. Neighbors from blocks around heard the screaming man as the crackling ball of feline fury landed on his face and began shredding it to bits. It took three policemen to pry the enraged cat off the bloody mess that had once been a man's face. He received a medal of honor from the mayor himself for that one.

He'd been the unchallenged master of his territory, father of many fine litters of kittens, and loyal guardian of all of loved. But age crept up on him like a thief in the night, stealing much of his strength and vigor. Aching joints made patrols impossible and his days were spent strolling and laying about his family home. During one calm night that the fat man came and grabbed the dozing tom and stuffed him into a moldy smelling bag. Of course Hariken didn't go easily; he had the satisfaction of tearing several deep gashes into his captor's hands before the bag closed.

Blacking out from the lack of air his next waking thought was of being thrown into a deep dark pit filled with many other cats. For days he and the others stayed within their dark prison given neither food nor water. The young and the weak were the first to fall to the ravages of starvation and Hariken was disgusted by those that fed on the corpses.

When the man finally opened the pit's hatch he did so just long enough to throw something in. The smell of fish drove the cats into a frenzy. Hariken was in much the same state till he caught sight of the young child beneath the long wrappings of fish sticks. Protective instincts surged to the fore overriding his hunger. Hariken did his best to protect the young human receiving many deep wounds in return for his heroic efforts. Each time the monster man threw the boy in the cats attacks grew worse till Hariken's old body finally failed him. His last thought before death claimed him was how he had failed to protect this little one.

But that was not the end for the old tom. His regret, rage, and determination to protect the boy propelled his soul into the traumatized child's mind. Hariken had failed to protect the boy in life he now would do his best to keep the Neko Ken from destroying child's mind. Here wounds meant nothing, age meant nothing, only will and determination mattered.

Now the boy was here, succeeding in passing through the storm barrier, to face the monster that dwelt within his own mind. Well, he wouldn't have to face the beast alone. Hariken would stand by him, fight beside him, to the bitter end.

&&&

Falling back both Ranma and the cat paused to regroup. The Neko Ken was far stronger than the young martial artist had first thought. He desperately needed a new plan of attack.

Hariken was not so confused; he knew what needed to be done. In order to defeat a cat one had to be a cat. Hariken was just a small cat; he lacked the speed and power to truly defeat the Neko Ken. But Ranma possessed both speed and power in abundance. Therefore Hariken merely needed to be a part of Ranma, to fully integrate himself with the boy's soul. It would be a permanent merging; no chance of separation, but the old tom had lived a full life and was willing to give himself to the boy if it meant his winning this all important fight. So it was decided. Without another thought Hariken launched himself at the boy's back.

Ranma jerked as the cat's surprisingly heavy body landed on his shoulders. Blue eyes widened as the strangest sensation he'd ever experienced washed over him. It felt as if the cat's body was ...melting into him!

New emotions flooded his mind, senses exploding as their strength increased a hundred fold. Filled with the cat's power he turned to face the Neko Ken again with a wild grin on his face. It was a whole new ball game now!

&&&

"GRANDPA!! GRANDPA LOOK!!!" Sota yelled, stumbling away as blinding blue light erupted from the small shed Ranma was in. It looked as if someone had set off a hundred flare all at once. The light pulsed repeatedly for almost a minute before slowly fading away leaving the old man and his grandson to creep hesitantly towards the door.

"Ranma? Ranma? Are you all right?" Grandfather called out.

Silence was his only answer.

"Ranma?" He tried again.

From inside the now darkened room a slight moan was heard.

That was heartening; you needed to be alive to moan.

Unlocking the door the pair peered inside and gasped at the sight that greeted them.

&&&

Absolutely livid with rage but unable to vent it in this all too public place Nabiki signed the last form on her sister and father's release papers.

All in all it had been far easier to garner her family's release than it was to gain her own.

Years worth of carefully hidden funds were secretly tapped, bribes laid out, and favors called in from officials who'd benefited from her operations in the past all contributed to gaining her release. With luck and her lawyers combined cunning they could tie the state's case up, bury it up under a mass of movements, motions, and legalities. It might be three years or more before Nabiki would ever have to set foot in a courtroom again if she was so inclined to do so.

With Akane and Soun all it took was calling in one of her more juicy little blackmail secrets and a hefty bribe to the institute's head to free the pair. This wasn't saying the two Tendos were getting off Scott free.

After evaluation Soun Tendo was diagnosed as emotionally unstable and out of touch with reality. The doctors' findings would prove useful when the D.A. pressed charges. The police would most certainly find enough evidence to charge Soun in both Happosai and Genma's crimes here in Japan; if not for aiding than at least for hiding them from the authorities.

Akane was facing more serious charges stemming from her morning fights and assaulting those police officers. As a stipulation for her release on bail the youngest Tendo was to attend Anger management classes three times a week till her trial. However Nabiki agreeing to these terms and getting Akane to actually attend was another matter. Her sister was the picture of blind ignorance when it came to her own faults, preferring to blame her countless mistakes on everyone else. When Ranma came along he was the perfect scapegoat for Akane and she used him mercilessly.

Now Ranma was gone and the entire country knew the uppermost fraction of her family's dark secrets. It fell to Nabiki to make sure they didn't find out the rest till her safety, freedom, and personal assets were secured.

Akane glared at the security guards as she passed them on the way out but didn't attempt anything physical. She wanted out of here and if refraining from punishing those perverts in uniform gained that then so be it. Retribution would come later when all this mess was done with. Nabiki would see to it she was sure; after all it was her sister's duty to the family.

Akane was looking forwards to things being back to normal. Once all the charges were cleared they'd drag Ranma back to the dojo and she could spend a few days pounding the little pervert. This was all Ranma's fault anyway so her breaking every bone in his body would be entirely justified. She could almost hear his screams of pain; feel the bones fracture beneath her skilled hands.

Soun was nearly giddy with excitement. Nabiki obviously had fixed everything; they were going home and soon he and Genma would find and then force Ranma to marry Akane and take over the dojo. His little girl would be so happy and his soft retirement firmly assured. Soun could almost see it; Akane smiling happily as she took care of his first grandchild while Ranma slaved away with the huge classes the boy's reputation had drawn in, Kasumi would be in the kitchen fixing dinner, and Nabiki would be in her favorite seat totaling up the day's revenue. He and Genma would of course be relaxing, playing shogi and drinking sake. Life would be perfect.

Whether it was from intelligence or just being lost in their impossible fantasies Akane and Soun kept quiet all through the cab ride home; a fact which Nabiki was imminently thankful for.

The house and dojo were a bit worse for wear after the police searches. Nabiki's room was worst hit, virtually stripped clean of anything that could be remotely related to her illegal activities. Her computer and all her file disks had been confiscated as evidence, books removed, and every nook and cranny searched for her stash of photos and blackmail material. The room looked like a typhoon had hit it.

Thank Kami they hadn't touched the grounds outside so the fake rock at the bottom of the koi pond should still contain all her real logs, photos, blackmail files, and personal account books.

Nearly growling in disgust Nabiki made her way back downstairs and took her usual seat at the family table.

"Well, now that everything's been taken care of we need to start planning the wedding." Soun clapped his hands together to gain his daughters attention.

"Daddy! I'm not marrying that damned pervert!!" Akane nearly shrieked at her father, a red battle

aura forming around her body.

Nabiki knew her father was a bit out of touch with reality but this was too much! "Daddy, everything has not been taken care of."

"What are you talking about Nabiki? Of course everything's all right. We're free, the master's gone, and all that's left is to see your sister married to Ranma."

"The charges have NOT been dropped Daddy! We're just out on bail." Nabiki rubbed her temples feeling a migraine coming on. "The lawyers are stonewalling our cases but as soon as the trial dates are set--."

Soun looked perplexed. "Trial dates? What on Earth would we have done to deserve trial dates?"

"Well Daddy you harbored two known criminals under your roof, deliberately misled the police about their location, and you attacked several police officers." She counted off the charges on her fingers. "And Akane's facing over a dozen charges of assault from her morning fights, assaulting two police officers, and resisting arrest."

Still her father didn't seem to grasp their situation here. "Akane? Assault? Nonsense! My little girl was just protecting herself."

"Yeah sure Daddy, why don't you go down to the hospital and tell that to the transfer student who asked her where the office was. She broke three of his ribs; hit him so hard one bone punctured his lung."

"He touched me." Akane growled.

"He tapped you on the shoulder."

"He was a pervert and got what he deserved. They're all perverts! And when Ranma comes back I'm going to break every bone in his body!!" The youngest Tendo was seething, aura beginning to glow about her. Her sister, her own sister was taking the perverts side!!

Nabiki held her temper rigidly in check just as she had done for years now. While her morning fights, pounding Kuno, and her constant malleting of Ranma for ever slight real or fake Akane had made the middle sister an exorbitant amount of money. When the other girls showed up with their claims on Ranma her cash flow tripled. It nearly tripled again when the boys cashing after Ranma's fiancées came and challenged Saotome time and again. Their fights did create a few repair bills but it brought in far more cash than it pulled out of her wallet.

Akane unknowingly brought in a sizable amount of questionable money in a way the younger sister wasn't aware of. It was a good thing she was ignorant; if Akane found out she'd most likely try to kill Nabiki sister or not. It was a secret Nabiki was absolutely determined to keep the investigating police from discovering even if she had to kill to do it, or have someone kill for her.

Every time Akane attempted to cook Nabiki would secretly collect some of the grotesque concoction. Several shadowy people paid heavily for the vile goop which was then turned over to scientists who refined and concentrated it to create one of the most potent and deadly toxins available on the black market. That her sister's innocent attempts to cook were being used to slaughter people in war torn third world countries didn't bother Nabiki a bit; the money was more important than the lives of people she'd never met.

And now everything she'd worked for, all the money she'd amassed was in danger.

"Now Akane that's no way to talk about your future husband." Admonished their father, waving

his finger and sporting that silly smile of his.

“Ranma’s not going to come back Daddy. He’s ronin now.”

“Of course he’s coming back Nabiki. The schools must be joi--.”

SLAP!!!

Soun reeled back; a deep red mark in the shape of a hand was imprinted on one cheek. He looked at his middle daughter in shock.

“Get through your head Daddy. Ranma is not coming back. Akane is not going to marry him. And with all this publicity there’s no one in the entire world that’ll have anything to do with the Tendo School!!” Nabiki’s voice was uncharacteristically harsh as she held her father’s gaze.

“HOW DARE YOU HIT OUR FATH💎💎”.

SLAP! SLAP!!

Akane’s forward charge was abruptly halted by Nabiki’s blows.

“SHUT UP!! IF YOU TWO IDIOTS HAD KEPT YOUR TEMPER AND WHAT LITTLE BRAINS YOU HAD IN CHECK WE WOULDN’T BE IN SUCH A BAD STATE!!” She screamed at her little sister and father.

“But-but the s-schools...” Soun weakly protested.

“The schools are dead!!! No one wants to learn from violent morons and two lazy and lying old men taught by Japan’s most hated pervert Happosai!!! It’s only a matter of time before the police dig up Genma’s criminal record and issue a warrant for his arrest. The only thing we can do is try to get out of this with our own skins intact!!”

Soun and Akane didn’t know that Nabiki really meant getting out with her skin intact. If her case took a turn for the worse the middle Tendo was prepared to flee the country. Her black market contacts were making arrangements for her to escape to one of the countries that had no extradition agreements with Japan. With her overseas accounts carefully concealed Nabiki could start again. Of course her plans didn’t include her family. Akane had served her purpose, and Soun became useless years ago. It would be all too easy to leave the two idiots behind to face their fates. Naturally Akane’s temper got the better of her and she snapped at her sister. “And what about you Nabiki? You’re the one they came here to arrest! You’re the one that started this mess!!!” “And who’s fault is that huh??” Her sister retorted. “Where do you think the money came from that bought our food, paid the bills, and kept clothes on our backs? Daddy is useless, has been for years!! He’s nothing but a weak-minded idiot that doesn’t have the patience to teach a fly! And you’re nothing but a bully!! A stupid little twit that’s deluded herself into thinking she’s a great martial artist simply because she beats up a bunch of untrained boys and one brain dead moron!! If it wasn’t for Ranma risking his life to save your ass you’d have been dead or married off to one of your kidnapers long ago!!”

“WHY YOU!!” The mallet of doom appeared in Akane’s hand and she swung it at her sister, fully intent on smashing the girl’s face in.

Only to stare in shock when the head of prized mallet fell to the floor with a thump, the handle cut cleanly by the dagger which Nabiki currently had pointed at Akane’s exposed neck. The younger Tendo froze, eyes staring at the gleaming blade in shock and horror. Her sister, her own sister was threatening her with a weapon!

“Don’t try that again Akane, you won’t like the results.” Nabiki smirked. It looked like all those secret little lessons from that Yakuza enforcer were paying off.

“WAAHHH!!! MY DAUGHTERS ARE FIGHTING EACH OTHER!! WAAHH!!” Wailed Soun, Tendo waterworks in full swing.

“OH SHUT UP!!” Both Nabiki and Akane screamed.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 6 by cobalt blue

“AH! A DEMON!! A DEMON!!” Grandpa yelled, grabbed a wad of wards, and began slapping them on the creature standing there in front of him.

“Hey! HEY! Cut that out!!” The demon swatted away the strips of paper; the wards were badly drawn and thus useless.

“R-Ranma?” Sota edged closer, peering intently at the transformed martial artist.

“Is that really you?”

“Yeah, it’s really me. Why do you ask?”

“You’ve changed.” The boy pointed towards the top of Ranma’s head.

Immediately Ranma reached up and his questing fingers found something on his scalp that shouldn’t be there.

Ignoring the old priest and the boy Ranma swept through the door and raced up to the house, sprinting up the stairs, not stopping till he was standing before the full length mirror in Kagome’s room. He took a deep breath to steady himself before opening his eyes...

In exceedingly rare moments like this Ranma was actually grateful his life was filled with bizarre things; such familiarity was all that kept him from going completely catatonic.

There atop his head were two real honest to goodness cat ears rising out from his ebony hair, twitching in reaction to his shock. Reaching up he touched the new appendages, feeling the warm blood pulsing through the skin beneath the soft fur. Just to make certain they were indeed real Ranma gave them an experimental tug and yelped at the sharp pain the move brought. Yep, they were real alright.

The young martial artist knew he should be freaking out about now, running about and screaming for explanations and cures, but all he felt was calm mixed heavily with curiosity. It wasn’t another curse, this he was certain of. His only explanation Ranma could come up with for his altered appearance was his merging with Hariken and finally mastering the Neko Ken.

A few experiments later and Ranma had the basic major ear muscles under his conscious control. Swiveling his new ears about the young martial artist was amazed at the range and depth of sound he could not detect. By focusing in on one particular sound he could listen to whatever was happening around him for an incredible three block radius!

Hearing wasn’t the only sense altered by his sudden transformation; smell and sight were equally affected. Scents he normally wouldn’t have even noticed as a human now stood out in sharp clarity; the lingering scent of Kagome on her bed sheets, the perfume her mother wore yesterday, and the glorious essence of his mate drifting up from the lock of his hair Ranma wore about his neck. Everywhere he now looked things seemed clearer, colors and shapes more sharply defined.

Blinking Ranma peered closer at his reflection. His irises, once round and full like any human’s, were now vertical slits that widened and constricted in reaction to the light coming from the nearby window.

“Just like a cats.” He murmured and was startled to see the tips of his canines. Grinning revealed a now very respectable set of fangs.

“Ryoga would sure be jealous. Wonder what else has changed.” And seeing that the girl who slept in this room was 500 years in the past Ranma didn't think she'd mind if he stripped to inspect himself.

There were indeed other changes to be seen scattered upon Ranma's body.

His height and basic body structure remained untouched and Ranma was thankful for that; his height placed him at just the right level to kiss his mate without bending over. Muscles were more defined and fairly radiated power; he could see the Ki infusing his flesh. Both the nails on his fingers and toes had strengthened and elongated into fine claws. Ranma flexed his hand and marveled at the pearly talons. He twisted at the waist to stretch and caught a glimpse of something black near his buttocks.

“A tail?!!”

It was a tail; long, thick, and covered with a thick coat of silky black fur. Just as with the ears Ranma gained control over his tail through a bit of practice.

“Guess ole Gramps is right,” he smirked at his reflection. “I really am a demon, a cat demon. Hope Inuyasha doesn't mind this too much.”

Ranma thought if anything Inuyasha would be delighted with his mate's change. Inuyasha was a half demon and therefore virtually immortal while Ranma, despite his extraordinary chi levels, could only hope to live a few meager centuries before age would rob the silver haired youth of his beloved mate. Now that Ranma was part demon he could look forwards to many, many long ages together with Inuyasha.

Hearing Sota come in the door downstairs Ranma quickly dressed, making sure to tear a small hole in his pants for his tail to stick out of, and prepared to face the Kagome's family.

###

“Umm, could you please not do that Mrs. Higurashi.”

Kagome's mother gave the black ears one more caress before releasing them. “Sorry about that Ranma, but they're just so cute!”

The woman certainly took Ranma's change far more easily than he had expected. She froze for about ten seconds before giving a squeal of delight and reaching for his ears, giggling as she played with the twitching things. After she satisfied her initial desire she moved onto to his tail, playing with it for a while before returning to her original target. Sota was almost as bad, wanted to touch but being a bit more polite about it.

“I've never seen or heard of anything like this.” Gramps shook his head, still amazed every time he looked at the transformed young man setting across from him.

“Well, the way my life's gone, this is just par for the course.” Ranma took a bite of his miso ball, savoring the taste. Mrs. Higurashi was certainly a good cook, maybe not quite as great as Kagome but better than many.

“Hey Ranma?” Sota tugged at his sleeve to gain the teen's attention. “Didn't your name used to be Saotome?”

the teen as his son, granting Ranma all the rights and protections that a family in Japan allowed. Though small in number the Ono clan were one of the older and more powerful clans in Japan and several members held important positions in the Japanese government. Tofu had already used one connection to get Mousse a proper set of papers so he could marry Kasumi and remain in Japan. Those selfsame connections could also be used to kick Cologne and Shampoo out of the country when the time was right.

Now that he had succeeded in gaining control of the Neko Ken he could accept Tofu's generous offer. Mousse had already become part of the Ono clan so that he could offer Kasumi a real family which would make the ex-Amazon male his brother once Tofu added him. That didn't bother Ranma at all, having been an only child on the road he'd always wanted a brother or sister.

Ranma would start his position as Tofu's apprentice, making an effort to learn everything the good Doctor could teach him in the healing arts as well as the Tofu family's fighting style. Tofu's new residence was quite larger than his old one and sported a very well designed dojo just waiting to be used. It wouldn't be a one way trade off of knowledge, Ranma was going to teach Tofu, Mousse, and Kasumi his own version of Anything Goes so that they would be able to defend themselves if his chaotic former life ever caught up with him.

Besides, he really wanted to see his new family's faces when he showed up looking like an extra for some American Broadway musical.

###

Huddled behind an empty trash bin, keeping to the shadows as much as possible, Genma rubbed his empty aching stomach with one dirt smeared hand.

This was all Ranma's fault. Ungrateful little brat, after all the sacrifices he'd made to see the boy trained in the art and this was how he repaid him?? Years on the road, facing the constant threat of starvation and the brutal elements, never remaining long in any one place. So maybe he didn't teach Ranma many of the things other fathers taught their sons; things like manners, proper interaction skills, and how to treat girls. If it didn't deal with the art it wasn't something the boy needed to know. The only thing Ranma needed to worry about was running the dojo and keeping Akane satisfied, Genma would take care of everything else; like handling the money. On countless nights he'd dreamed of the time when he didn't have to do anything more than sit, eat, and count money, of when his only worries were keeping the boy firmly under his control.

So long as Ranma depended on him Genma's future life of luxury was assured.

That Akane was a violent, highly abusive girl with absolutely no household skills didn't matter. Kasumi would stay and manage the house whether she wanted to or not thus freeing her youngest sister to produce the next generation of Anything Goes practitioners. Soun, with his weak emotions, posed no threat and would provide Genma with someone to talk to, drink with, and play games with. Nabiki might've been a problem with her less than legal desires for money but non martial artists were susceptible to all manner of nasty 'accidents' around the house. There'd have been a funeral, a period of mourning and then Genma could sit back and watch all his dreams come true.

Now all his dreams had become nightmares. The arrests of Soun, Akane, and Nabiki had ruined the Tendo schools' reputation and he had no doubt the police would be after him as soon as they ran his prints. His stomach growled even louder and Genma once more gave thought about going to his wife's house for sanctuary but again dismissed it. Nodoka would unsheathe that sword of hers and try her best to decapitate him for his 'failure' to make Ranma a man among men and his own criminal doings. Maybe he shouldn't have married the crazy bitch but she was the only one he thought would give up her child if he fed her the right story.

Well, he wasn't going to find any edible food here. Heaving himself up Genma straitened his filthy clothes and headed towards one of the city's larger parks. There were several groves of bamboo there if he remembered correctly. It wouldn't be as filling as Kasumi's home cooking but it'd keep him alive long enough to think of a way to salvage something from this whole mess.

###

Slamming the paper down onto the old table Nodoka drew her sword and slashed both the paper and the furniture beneath it neatly in half.

This was a total disaster. The Tendo family was in complete public disgrace and now the same dark fate threatened the Saotome family as well. The article in the paper about Genma's many criminal acts had been run in as many of Japan's newspapers as it could be supplied to. To make matters worse the story had made its way to the television. Reporters smelling a hot story were even now sniffing around the neighborhood all day in hopes of catching Nodoka for an interview. She was more inclined to take the blade to them than supply the filthy little bloodsuckers with anymore damaging material about her family.

If she ever saw that gluttonous moron who called himself her husband she'd kill the bastard herself and drag his rotting carcass off to the nearest police station. Maybe that would put a halt to the dwindling of clan's honor.

Little did she know it was already far too late for any attempts to salvage the destroyed honor of the Saotome clan. Nodoka herself would provide the final nail on its coffin lid.

###

"Wake up Inuyasha, supper's ready." Shippo shook the sleeping half demon's shoulder.

Golden eyes opened and focused on the eager little fox demon. "Okay Shippo, just give me a moment."

Kaede and Miroku's concern over Inuyasha's gestation time were indeed well founded. The baby was growing faster than was normal for a human. If the rate of growth didn't slow the silver haired youth might be ready to deliver in four or five month's time. Already there was a definite curve to Inuyasha's formally flat stomach. Thankfully his clothes were large enough to handle his expanded waistline so he remained in his familiar red robes.

The villagers were nervous around the half demon, the males especially leery of his unusual condition. No matter how many times Kaede told them it wasn't infectious they still feared to come into contact with Inuyasha. Men who had faced demon centipedes and other dark creatures without running scuttled away like frightened rabbits every time the half demon ventured out of the guest house. Thankfully the village women didn't harbor such fears and rallied around Inuyasha.

They understood the stresses a pregnancy could place on their bodies, how much more so would it be to carry for a male half demon?

Amazingly Inuyasha was very patient with the village women, answering their questions and accepting their advice with a calmness uncharacteristic to him. His entire attitude towards his pregnancy was shocking to those who knew and lived with his less than gentle personality, especially to Kagome. The future girl was becoming more and more annoyed with Inuyasha. She was frustrated by the stalled mission to retrieve the remaining shards and by her trips back to her own time.

Evidently there this strange teen coming around and helping Grandpa with the temple. She hadn't met the boy yet but every time she was home all her family could talk about was Ranma this or Ranma did that. Even her own mother was so taken with this mysterious Ranma she barely asked her daughter about her latest trip to the past. When she finally met this Ranma person she'd give him a piece of her mind.

As Inuyasha settled down besides Kirara and accepting the bowl Miroku offered him Kagome shot him a dark glare which the half demon completely ignored in favor of devouring the hearty stew Kaede had cooked. So intent on her anger towards the silver haired boy Kagome completely missed the faint tingle of a shard nearby.

###

The strange wasp whisked through the trees and branches, little mind intent on reaching its master. A small clearing opened up before it shrouded in a thin veil of mist. And there in the middle of the clearing was a figure covered by a thick cloak of white fur and a baboon's face. One hand rose, fingers outstretched for the winged messenger to alight on. Within moments all that the wasp had seen and heard that day were transferred to its waiting master.

"Most interesting. So Inuyasha is with child. This could prove to be very profitable, very profitable indeed." Naraku chuckled softly before crushing the wasp to retrieve the tiny shard contained within its body.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 7 by cobalt blue

Author's Notes:

A little crossover in this section with those defenders of love and justice the Sailor Scouts. I don't care much for the girls so there will be a little bit of bashing here.

"No!"

"Now, Miss Tendo💎💎".

"Shut up you idiot!!"

"Miss Tendo, please calm down!"

"I said SHUT UP!!!"

The secretary whose desk was adjacent to the door where all the screaming was coming from sadly shook her head and reached for the phone. It was time to call the department head and, most likely, the ambulance too if one were to judge by the sounds of escalating violence and previous sessions.

"Miss Ten💎💎"no! That's an--."

SMASH!

"Authentic antique vase."

"You're just another pervert!!"

"What are you...put down that desk!!"

"Just like every boy!! PERVERTS!!!"

"AAAaahhhhh!!"

CCCRRAASSSHHH!!!

The entire wall shook with the impact of something very heavy colliding with it. Seconds later a very shaky and disheveled man in torn clothes scrambled out of the room like all the hounds of hell were baying at his heels. Slamming the door shut he slapped the control which triggered a series of locks to engage. Not satisfied with that protective measure he took it step further by grabbing the nearest large piece of furniture, namely a nearby cabinet, and began desperately dragging it to the door in hopes of sealing the terror held inside.

“What on earth are you doing Atsu?”

Whirling around the man took a few steps towards his gray haired superior, one shaking hand pointed towards the barricaded door from behind which they could hear Akane Tendo ranting about the evil of all males while she went about destroying everything in sight.

“I AM NOT GOING BACK IN THERE WITHOUT A STEEL NET, A TRANQUILIZER GUN, AND A FULLY CHARGED CATTLE PROD!!!” He screamed, almost hyperventilating in his fear.

Dr. Kurisaka sighed. Atsu had been the seventh therapist to try his hand with the Tendo girl. He was luckier than his ill fated predecessors; he'd managed to escape without any serious injuries. And seven was supposed to be such a lucky number too. Sadly his failure left her no other recourse but to turn to Clyde.

“Don't worry Atsu; you don't have to back in. I'm removing you from the case.”

Atsu breathed a huge sigh, relieved beyond measure. For a few scary moments there he seriously believed he was going to die at the hands of one of his patients.

“Are you going to take her on yourself Ma'am?” He asked when he finally got his nerves back in a semblance of order.

“No,” Dr. Kurisaka said as she flipped open her cell phone. “I'm handing her over to Clyde.”

Clyde.

The mere mention of that name sent a tremor of fear through everyone present. One secretary dropped the files she was carrying and scrambled back to her desk for her purse; she'd suddenly developed a case of the flu and needed to go home right away. Other therapists, who'd been drawn out of their offices by the commotion, disappeared back into the relative safety of their rooms with frightening speed. Locks clicked and lights were quickly extinguished. Atsu struggled to regain his both his breath and his fragile hold on his activated flight reflex.

“C-C-Clyde?? You're really giving her...to Clyde??” He gulped nervously, eyeing the door where the violent girl could still be heard ranting.

“Clyde has never failed before, even with the most impossible seeming cases.”

“But...Clyde?”

Kurisaka just smiled as she dialed the special access code to Clyde's phone. Clyde was her secret weapon, her absolute measure of last recourse. Only the most violent and unreachable patients ended up with Clyde.

“May Kami have mercy on her poor soul.” One secretary intoned in a solemn voice.

“May he have mercy on us all.” Atsu said before staggering away to find the staff gym; he needed

a change of clothes and sweats would just have to do for now.

&&&

Akane was beyond the fuming stage and had entered the seriously pissed off phase. This whole anger management therapy stuff was an utter waste of time. She wasn't violent; she had complete control over her emotions. If only all these idiots and perverts would leave her alone and not try her patience she'd be fine. Dr. Kurisaka seemed a nice enough woman when they'd first met but after being subjected to a string of detestable women and lecherous old men who were supposed to 'help' her she was starting to doubt the older woman's competency.

So now she waited in this strange room which was virtually bare of any furniture and decorations for her new therapist. Dr. Kurisaka had told her that this was to be her last therapist and this made Akane extremely glad. Once she'd convinced this one of her obvious iron control over her temper she'd be free to leave this place and search for that stupid pervert. Thinking of Ranma made her mind drift back to all the horrible damage she was going to inflict on the bastard once she had him in her grasp. So wrapped in her sadistic daydreams Akane failed to notice the door opening.

"Greetings Miss Tendo, I'm your new therapist." A woman's voice called out.

Blinking, pulling herself back to reality, Akane turned to greet the woman...and had her jaw drop in astonishment.

Standing there, framed by the light coming from the hall, was a woman unlike any the youngest Tendo daughter had ever seen.

She was about seven feet tall give or take an inch, possessing a bosom which would've sent Happosai into a fit of perverted ecstasy, narrow waist, and hips sure to sway seductively when she walked. Her hair was strait, black, and hung down past buttocks and held back from her aristocratic face with a pair of silver dragon clips. What shocked Akane so badly was the new therapist's attire. Black and red skin tight leather seemed to be her preferred clothing. A black spiked studded collar circled her slim neck, just matching her knee high stiletto heel leather boots. In her leather gloved hand she held a long wicked looking riding crop which she lazily tapped against the other palm. Her porcelain fine skin stood out in stark contrast to her dark clothes, blood red lips, and coal black eyeliner around her frigid blue eyes. At her hips, clipped to a looped belt, was a collection of whips, chains, handcuffs, and a tazer.

"Hello Akane," she smiled, fangs glittering in the light as she walked closer. "My name's Clyde. We're going to be such good friends."

And from outside Dr. Kurisaka could just be glimpsed as she closed and locked the door and left the poor girl to her fate.

&&&

Happy sounds filled the evening air at the new Ono compound. Tonight's gala celebration was being held to welcome the newest member of the Ono clan. Finally, after many grueling hours of paperwork and days filled with talking to lawyers and government officials, Ranma was officially now Tofu's son and the good doctor couldn't be happier. The young man was everything one could possibly want in their child; he was brave, handsome, talented, intelligent, compassionate, honorable, and skilled in a large number of fields. Not to mention those ears and flexing tail added a touch of the exotic that had succeeded in driving every girl, not to mention quite a number of boys, within a three block radius into a mound of ecstatic goo if he even so much as smiled at them.

How Ranma turned out so well after being raised by such bilge scum as Genma Saotome was

far beyond Tofu's understanding. Hmm, come to think of it Ranma looked absolutely nothing like Genma. Maybe he should check these things out; little inconsistencies like these tended to eat at Tofu's soul till he took time away from his practice to investigate them. He still had a few samples of Genma's blood and tissue and Hito down at the testing lab still owed him a favor...

Well, enough of such things. Kasumi's exceptional cooking was calling to him and Tofu didn't have the will to resist such a succulent temptation.

Mere seconds after hearing the good news Kasumi had headed straight towards the kitchen to begin preparing the steaming goodies laid out before them, each dish a visual and culinary delight to the senses. A momentary pang of regret filled his heart. If he'd only gotten over his nervousness a few months earlier it could've been him Kasumi was smiling at, him she was feeding a delicately sliced bit of sushi. But the regret only lasted a moment before fading away. He was genuinely happy that Kasumi and Mousse had found each other and hoped that someday, with Kami's blessing, he'd find someone equally as wonderful as Kasumi for himself.

"Well Ranma, how does it feel to be my son?" Tofu asked as he took a sip of sake.

"Better than I ever imagined it." The young man grinned back at his new father. "I'd love to have a camera on hand for when Nodoka and the panda hear about this."

"That would indeed be a moment to capture."

"What are your plans for tomorrow Ranma?" Kasumi asked as she set more soy sauce on the table.

"I plan to go hunting," he savored the taste of the tempura. "I have a panda to catch."

If Genma Saotome hadn't been such a complete bastard Kasumi, Mousse, and Tofu might've felt sorry for him.

"Be very careful Ranma." Kasumi cautioned her new future brother-in-law.

"You don't think that old slob can hurt me do you Kasumi?"

The young woman shook her head. "Not at all; remember not to rough him up too badly otherwise the police won't recognize him when you turn him in."

Everyone stared at Kasumi for a second before breaking out in decidedly wicked laughter.

&&&

Setsuna shook her head, rigidly holding her anger and deep sense of loss in check. After all this time, all the effort she and the other Scouts had put into this dream of the perfect future, and it was all for nothing.

Crystal Tokyo was no more. It had ceased to exist in every future that she looked through.

Previously when something or someone threatened Crystal Tokyo's future existence Pluto would alert Uranus and Neptune and between the three of them they'd discreetly 'take care' of the problem. She normally didn't tell the inner Scouts about what the younger girls might consider their less than honorable deeds. No doubt the Princess would order them to stop; after all cold blooded murder wasn't something that was condoned even in the Silver Millennium. But this time, this time it was different. This time there wasn't a damn thing they could do.

Needless to say upon hearing this news Michiru and Haruka didn't take it too well. Haruka was

all set and ready to go right out and kill this new obstacle just like in previous times. It took almost a whole hour of patient talking, actually yelling, and the threat of being banned from Michiru's bedroom for a month to finally calm the blonde down.

When Setsuna was finally able to explain matters the two women both paled and vowed to keep as far away from this Ranma fellow as humanly possible. Neither Scout wanted to risk the terrible punishment they would incur should they break one of the most ancient and powerful covenants of the Moon Kingdom.

&&&

Ducking into a dark alley Genma paused to get control of his wheezing breath. After living off bamboo for a week Genma couldn't stand it any longer; he absolutely had to have real food! He knew from a discarded newspaper that the police had indeed identified him. Contained within the article was his photo and general list of what the authorities considered were his crimes.

Bah! What did the police know; many of those supposed 'crimes' were really training exercises. Anything necessary to advance the boy's training in the martial arts was perfectly legal in his oh so humble opinion.

Under the cover of night Genma had slunk back into the city when his hunger finally became unbearable. His first order of business was returning to his human form. That proved easier than he'd anticipated. Thank Kami for those western Jacuzzis. Not only had he reverted to his proper body he got to clean up a bit too. Leaving the now filthy spa behind Genma stole several pieces of clothing from the clothesline next door; the owner's forgetfulness was now his fortune. Now feeling a bit more human the older martial artist headed for the restaurants.

Genma longed for buckets of hot spicy ramen, succulent pieces of sushi, bowls of steaming rice, tempura, yakitori, grilled miso chicken, and bottle upon bottle of sake but knew the minute he stepped into any eatery he'd be instantly recognized. So Genma took to breaking into and raiding the kitchens of restaurants that had closed for the night. Two nights of heavy eating and Genma was beginning to feel like his old self again. Unfortunately on the sixth night his luck ran out. Evidently several restaurant owners on hearing of the repeated break-ins had banded together to fight this threat to their financial well being. Armed with guns, bats, tazers, and walkie talkies owners hid in their restaurant's kitchens and waited. Sure enough, one of them caught Genma breaking through the roof access hatch. The elder Saotome barely made it out of there without getting his head bashed in.

This setback of Genma's proved to be worse than he had originally thought. The owner had seen and recognized his face and reported this sighting to the authorities. Once the news reached the reporters they began broadcasting the confirmed sighting to everyone thus laying the foundation to Genma's current state of misery. Drawn by the substantial reward for his capture countless bounty hunters, martial artists, and so called heroes had descended on the area; he was like a mouse surrounded by dozens of hungry eager cats.

Genma tried to get away, leave the city, but each time he ran into some out to get him and had to turn back.

Now he scuttled about the streets and dirty alley ways of Tokyo's darker sections like a rat seeking a bolt hole.

Had he been a bit more observant and intelligent Genma might've noticed he had already been spotted by one of his pursuers.

###

High up on a nearby roof, silhouetted against the full moon a figure crouched, glowing blue eyes scanning the streets below, ears cupped forwards to catch the faintest sounds from his prey.

With his heightened senses and night vision Ranma found the task of hunting Genma ridiculously easy. The fat bastard was so utterly predictable. It was just impossible for a glutton like Genma to break his eating habits; it was only a matter of time before his hunger drove him out of whatever hiding place he'd scurried off to after the raid.

The only puzzling matter to his little adventure was the way every cat he came across acted towards him. Even the most haggard and human wary alley cat happily approached him and bowed, called him the honorable title of Lord. Some went so far as to offer him in cat speech their services should he require them. Five of the largest cats in the area even now were scattered around him, watching him and his prey, relaying information to Ranma through body language and soft throated meows.

This was really too easy. He had hoped this adventure would be a little more difficult.

So intent upon his target Ranma failed to notice that he too was being hunted.

###

“What do you mean the readings don't match??”

Ami ignored the other scouts as she peered at the screen of her special computer. “Exactly what I said, this demon's readings don't match any previous ones we've ever battled. There's absolutely no trace of negamoon energy in it.”

“So he's different, so what?” Rei punched her balled fist into her other hand. “We know he's up to no good. I say we nail him now!”

“But we promised to wait for Luna and Artemis.” Usagi tried to stem off her friend's eagerness for battle. They didn't even know if the strange boy was really an enemy.

Usagi had been the first to spot the young man as she walked back to her house from the arcade. At first Usagi believed she was hallucinating from all the sugar she'd ingested but after shaking her head and blinking several times the young girl had to believe what her eyes were telling her. There he was, an incredibly handsome young man with black cat ears and a long black tail waving behind him as he walked by. It was obvious that he was looking for something, or perhaps someone, by the way he kept peering down each alley he passed. Sprinting home she immediately called the other scouts so they could deal with this potential threat before any innocents were hurt.

The only things that were confusing to her was the way Luna had reacted when she had described the young man. The black moon cat had suddenly become highly agitated and literally ordered Serena to keep away from that young man and not attack him under any circumstances. She and the other scouts were to wait till she and Artemis arrived.

Usagi was all too willing to wait till the two moon cats showed up but the others didn't have as much patience. Rei and Mitako especially were just itching for a fight after having nearly three weeks of peace and quiet. At least Minako and Ami were willing to hang back with her.

“I'm not gonna wait!!” Mitako ran and jumped over to the next roof with Rei hot on her heels.

“Jupiter! Mars! Wait!! C'mon! We gotta stop them!” Usagi said to her two remaining friends.

###

Just as he was about to pounce on his unsuspecting prey his danger sense went into hyper drive. His sideways leap saved him from a rather severe case of singed fur as the place he'd been standing mere seconds ago was blasted by a rolling ball of fire.

"You missed!!"

"It's quicker than I thought!"

Whirling around towards the sound of the voices Ranma was confronted by a sight which might've come from some twisted pervert's wet dream. Silly looking sailor fucus with incredibly short skirts and standing in what he supposed they thought were intimidating battle poses; these just had to be the famous Sailor Scouts he'd heard Nabiki rattle on so much about. Happosai would be in grope heaven if he were here.

Making no effort to hide his annoyance at their unprovoked attack Ranma crossed his arms and glared at the two girls closest to him. "Mind telling me why you attacked me?"

"Negamoon scum like you don't deserve to live!" Growled the red skirted one with the long black hair.

Ranma's annoyance now turned to anger as three more girls showed up. "You're the Sailor Scouts right?"

"That's right! And now we're gonna kick you're ass!!" The greed skirted one yelled and moved to attack, lightening crackling about her hands. Her companion joined in with her fire based moves. Ranma's aura casually shrugged off both attacks, the martial artist noting in passing the scout's weren't nearly as powerful as he'd been led to believe from all the reports and Nabiki's manga.

Jupiter and Mars did a high five as they watched their feline opponent disappear beneath the fury of their combined attacks.

"That was too easy"

"Think again."

Before either girl knew what was happening Ranma burst from the smoke and was among them. Like swift running water he flowed through their ranks, batting aside their amazingly feeble defenses. Weren't these girls supposed to be some fantastic fighting force? Weren't they the ones that beat powerful monsters time and again? Kami! Akane on her worst day could've defeated them! Only one of them seemed to have any inkling of martial arts skills and that wasn't saying much.

He sniffed in disgust, they weren't real martial artists just another batch of brainless idiots who foolishly depended almost entirely on their magical attacks in battle. Damn sloppy if you asked him.

A few selective pressure points later and he had all five supposed super heroines laid out in a row. Taking down the three late arrivals was a safety measure and besides he only wanted to explain things one time. Standing over their frozen forms he planted his hands firmly on his hips and glared at the horizontal heroines.

"All right now listen up you bimbos." He got five deadly glares for the bimbo part but Ranma wasn't fazed by it since he'd seen far worse. "I am NOT negamoon scum, whatever that is. I'm not out to do anything bad, in fact I'm doing Tokyo a huge favor. The piece of filth I'm after tonight is none other than Genma Saotome. Surely you've heard of him; that is assuming any of you twits

can read?"

Five sets of eyes filled with anger but also recognition. Evidently they could indeed read or maybe they'd seen one of the many reports that had run on the news.

"That waste of human flesh made the majority of my life, and many others, so far an absolute living hell. He owes me, owes me far more than I'll ever be able to collect but I intend to do the best I can on that front. There's a big reward posted for him. It won't bring back the years he's stolen from me but it will make my new life a bit easier. Now those points are going to wear off in about five minutes and I suggest that when this happens you get up and go pester someone else!!"

Ranma started to walk away but just couldn't leave without offering one more parting shot. "And while you're at it find something more sensible, and a bit less revealing, to wear; you look like something out of a porno magazine."

If looks could kill he'd be dead and buried a half a mile underground by now. The blonde with the bow in her hair looked especially murderous; evidently she liked dressing up like this. Maybe she liked having old perverts drooling over her. Girls, he was never going to understand them.

"My Lord!! My Lord!!" a sharp female voice called and Ranma spun towards to source. If it was more of these damned scouts he was going to strip them and cuff them to the wall of Happosai's cell. Instead of girls however he was faced with two cats; one white and one black, both baring a golden crescent moon on their foreheads. Before the cats could come within five feet of Ranma they were bowled over and pinned to the roof by his feline hunting companions.

Artemis and Luna struggled beneath the heavy paws of their captors, panting to catch their breath from the long run here. Seeing neither animal had sufficient power to even injure him Ranma motioned for his cats to release these two newcomers.

"My Lord, please forgive these girls for their actions, they are very young and don't understand how badly they've behaved." Both cats begged as they prostrated themselves before Ranma.

For a split second the young martial artist was too stunned to move. Again with the Lord bit. What in hell were the cats, and these two talking cats, going on about? Well might as well go with the flow here. It might even be fun.

Pulling a mantle of regal arrogance and ill concealed annoyance around himself Ranma stared down at the white and black felines, who promptly began to tremble in fear. He chose his words very carefully; any use of his old speech patterns would spoil the entire illusion. "The task of teaching them fell to you both, why have they not been properly schooled? They interfered in my hunt!" He snapped and had the satisfaction of seeing Luna and Artemis flinch.

If only he could see his reflection now Ranma would be astonished to see a silver crescent moon appear on his forehead; the mark of the Lord of Cats.

(Man, this Lord act is fun; maybe I should do it more often.) But not too often, he didn't want to end up with an over inflated ego like Kunos.

"With the repeated attacks from the negamoon there hasn't been any time," Luna ventured to lift her gaze only to return to staring at the black rooftop. Even a glimpse of those fierce blue feline eyes was enough to strike true fear into the ancient moon cat.

"See that it doesn't happen again. Now get them out of my sight, I have hunting to do." And without further word He hopped across the alley to the roof beyond closely followed by his loyal feline guards.

Artemis and Luna remained in their humble position till they were sure Ranma was out of sight before rising and rounding on the still prone girls.

“You idiots!!” Luna spat, pacing furiously, back fur raised in her agitation. “Do you have any idea what could’ve have happened tonight?? At the beginning of the Silver Millennium Queen Serenity entered into a covenant with the Lord of Cats; the ruler of the Northern Lands of Earth, one of the four noble Demon Lords who were known for their bravery and honor. Yes, even demons can be good.” She hissed at Rei’s disbelieving look.

“The Cat Lord rules over all felines and I do mean all! Even we moon cats! We were the Lord of Cat’s gift to Queen Serenity upon the covenant’s completion. The covenant states that no one of the Moon Kingdom would interfere with Earth or any member of the four Demon Lords, their descendants or their courts. If you had succeeded in killing the Cat Lord the ancient magic of the covenant would’ve stripped away your powers and your immortality!!” Artemis swiped at Minako’s ribbon. She hated it when he messed with her hair ribbons.

“Idiots!” He shook his white head in anger. “Act first; think later, if there is a later.”

“Lets’ just get them back to the temple where we can properly talk.” Luna said as she watched the girls beginning to regain their ability to move.

&&&

Sounds of battle shattered the night’s calm air...

Witnesses later reported to the investigating police that they saw two fighters engaged in a very heated battle. This baffled the investigating officers; just two people did all this damage? After further questioning it was confirmed that this wasn’t one of those attacks involving the Sailor Scouts rather it was two men. One was described as being a rather fat bald man with glasses which immediately got the officers to thinking he might be the infamous Genma Saotome. Visions of money danced through their heads as each man dreamed about getting the reward offered for such a capture. The other fighter was by all witnesses accounts not entirely human. He was a young man, rather handsome, with black cat ears and a long black tail. He was also said to have several very large mean looking cats accompanying him. The battle was absolutely brutal and a bit one sided since the younger man beat his opponent around like a cat playing with a captured mouse. The last time any of the witnesses saw of the two it was of the younger man dragging the fat man’s unconscious body off down the streets.

&&&

Ranma walked proudly up the Police Station’s steps completely ignoring the frozen in their tracks people who were staring at him in open mouthed shock. It wasn’t everyday that one saw a cat boy dragging the battered, filthy, and unconscious body of one of Japan’s most wanted criminals behind him like an old sack of potatoes. The trip here had been relatively easy; Ranma only had to stop once to knock Genma out again. For good measure he hit several rather special points on his body that the old bastard would find very interesting when he woke up. The Police would also thank him for it.

He walked up the steps; not bothering with the fact his captive’s head was hitting every one of the stone steps he passed over. Just as he reached the last flat level before the entrance the double doors swung open and out spilled at least a dozen reporters and the top three officers of the Special Investigations unit.

By sheer luck, and perhaps the favor of a few Kami, Ranma had arrived just minutes after the Unit’s latest press conference had ended. The reporters blinked in confusion till one recognized

the young man's unconscious captive.

"It Saotome! He's captured Genma Saotome!!"

Her cry sent her fellow reporters into a frenzy as they converged on the martial artist. Questions spilled out of their lips like water as they crowded around Ranma who was blinking in pain from all the photo flashes. It was only after Captain Misato's sternly barked order that the men and women from the media pulled back.

"Congratulations Mister..."

"Ono, Ranma Ono."

One of the Captain's eyebrows shot up at the sound of Ranma's name but he kept from asking about it till later. "Well congratulations Mr. Ono on your capture of this dangerous criminal. I expect you're here to turn him in and collect the reward?"

"Yes sir."

"Then come inside. I want to hear all the details." He began to usher the boy in while his two subordinates took possession of Saotome's still unconscious body.

"Ranma? RANMA!!" A woman's voice rose above the din and the crowd split to allow her to move forwards.

Captain Misato watched as the young man besides him tensed and glared at the approaching woman, eyes warily watching her every move.

"Ranma, you've come to your senses at last!" She moved as if to hug him but he stepped away a second before she could touch him. "You've found your father--"

"That piece of dirt isn't my father, and you're not my mother." He hissed, ears narrowed back tightly against his skull, tail thrashing. "I am part of the Ono clan, my name is Ono Ranma." This was said with a great deal of love and pride.

"Ono? Ono? Nonsense! And what are those things on your head? Cat ears? Wearing such things isn't very manly son." Nodoka scoffed, by now she was so engrossed with talking to her son that she'd totally forgotten where they were or who the people were surrounding them. It was a moment of forgetfulness that she'd regret for decades to come. "You're a Saotome. Now stop this foolishness and come home with me. We have a great deal of planning to do."

She made a move to grab his arm which he easily sidestepped. All around them the reporters were either writing furiously or recording the whole event on their cameras.

"I don't have to listen to you. You're not my parent!" He hissed, hair now bristling on his lashing tail.

"You'll do as I say or I'll have you commit seppuku right here!! Your father has stained the Saotome name, but all is not totally lost. Our honor will be restored as soon as you marry one girl and keep the others as mistresses! The Tendos are entirely unsuitable but that restaurant girl is nice and very self sufficient. She'll do for your wife. The Amazon and the gymnast should be content with being your mistresses so long as you keep them satisfied. We'll see to the other fiancées as they arrive."

By now the reporters all thought they'd died and gone to heaven. This business with the Saotome and Tendo families was turning out to be an endless goldmine of stories. Now here

was another storyline for them to delve into. This woman wanted the young man before her, he who used to be her son, to marry one girl and use the others like concubines in some desert harem? And she thought this was honorable?

“I said no.”

Rage filled Nodoka’s eyes, hands automatically unwrapping the family’s honor blade from its travel cloth. Gripping the hilt she pulled it free of its sheaf and charged her disobedient son. Only she didn’t get very as several burly policemen immediately tackled her to the ground. Struggling to get free Nodoka lost grip on her sword which was picked up by her son.

Making sure that his former mother’s eyes were on him Ranma lifted the blade high before bringing it down on his knee. Nodoka screamed in outrage as the sword which had been in the Saotome family for generations was broken and tossed down on the ground like a piece of trash.

“Nodoka Saotome you are under arrest for assault with a deadly weapon and attempted murder. Take her and that piece of filth she calls a husband inside and book them.” Captain Misato’s orders were immediately followed. His men were very eager to get the two Saotomes out of their hands since they felt dirty from just touching the pair.

Ranma ignored the screams of his former mother as she was dragged kicking and screaming into the station followed by her still unconscious husband. As the doors closed Ranma felt another great weight lift from his soul. The Tendos were gone and his parents were both heading to jail. He just had to deal with the amazons, the Kunos, and Ukyo and he’d finally be free of his former life. Turning to the Captain he was about to ask the older man how long filling out the paperwork would take when his ears picked up something.

“RANMA!!!!”

The voice was familiar, the cry filled with pain, fear, and desperation.

“INUYASHA!!” He screamed and forgetting everything and everyone around him Ranma raced back towards the temple at full speed.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 8 by cobalt blue

Author’s Notes:

Here we get a full introduction to Ranma’s five feline companions. Watch for cat speech and some wicked plot twists, revelations, fierce battles, and nifty powers.

// // = cat speech

“This is an OUTRAGE!! An insult to the Ambassador, his family, and our great nation!!”

Mr. Tsugi closed his eyes and wondered for the hundredth time whatever had possessed him to take a job in the Ministry’s foreign relations office. His father had made the work he did sound so wonderful, so important. Why had he ever believed the conniving old bastard? “Please calm down Mr. Dupree, I’m sure this is all just a simple misunderstanding.” He said with what he hoped was a calming tone.

But the French official wouldn’t calm down, if anything he became even more incensed.

“MISUNDERSTANDING???! Your assistant assured the Ambassador that his daughter’s tour of the local high school would run smoothly, that she would be perfectly safe at Furinkan!”

FURINKAN?!! Furinkan as in school full of crazed martial artists, school that housed two thirds of the Demented Trio Furinkan?? Damn that Shizuo! The miserable little twerp had really done it now! Tsugi didn’t care if Shizuo’s uncle was a high ranking official when he got through with that brat the boy would be lucky to find a job hauling garbage!

That is if he himself retained any power after this whole disaster was over.

“Not ten minutes after she arrived at Furinkan her bodyguards were attacked, knocked unconscious, and she is being sexually molested by this poetry spouting, wooden-sword carrying madman!”

Sword carrying...poetry...Oh Kami, it was that moron Tatawaki Kuno. Could this mess get any worse??

Apparently it could.

“Thankfully one of her guards recovered enough to subdue her attacker with a couple of dozen well placed maximum-level tazer charges. Once the others were awake the boy was restrained and police summoned to arrest him. While they were waiting the school’s principal arrived. The head of Mademoiselle Jacques’s protection unit described the man as and I quote ‘a freaky looking creature dressed in an overly loud Hawaiian shirt, shorts, and appeared to have a tiny palm tree growing out of his head’ end quote.”

(Oh shit! Where’s the Tylenol!) Tsugi began searching through his cluttered drawers for the blessed bottle of sanity saving drugs. Once he found it Tsugi spent several seconds trying to pry the bottle open, silently cursing the moron that created these damn child-proof caps, you needed a child to open the stupid things! Freeing the lid he shook out two pills and popped them in his mouth, then thought a second, and took four more.

“The second after he laid eyes on Mademoiselle Jacques the principal pulled out an electric razor, started yelling something about her needing a bowl cut, and tried to attack her. One of the guards shot him before he got within five feet.”

“Is he dead?” Tsugi knew Kami wasn’t going to be that gracious to him today.

“No.”

Well that cut the upcoming grueling paperwork in half even if it would’ve saved him loads of it later. “So Mademoiselle Jacques left Furinkan then without any further incident?”

From the expression on Dupree’s face that wasn’t the case.

“Far from it. Security deemed Furinkan High far too dangerous and attempted to evacuate before anything else happened. Just ten feet away from the gates they were intercepted by a girl wearing a gymnast’s leotard and twirling a long red ribbon. She said something about her ‘Darling Ranma’ and tried to attack Mademoiselle Jacques while calling her all manner of foul and demeaning names like harlot and whore. Two security guards suffered serious lacerations while another may lose the use of his right arm due to severed nerves and muscles. The other agents managed to take the girl down by sheer weight of numbers.”

Forget the Tylenol; give him valium, lots and lots of valium.

“Now Mr. Tsugi, I demand to know just what you and your government are going to do to apologize for this gross insult??”

Maybe he should just skip the valium entirely and go strait onto the really hard stuff. Heroine sounded nice right now.

&&&

Fifteen seconds after the news of the bizarre attacks on the visiting French Ambassador's fourteen year old daughter aired on television an emergency board meeting was called at Kuno Enterprises.

For years now the board members had struggled to keep the company afloat while dealing with the insanity of the three remaining Kunos. This task wasn't easy; several times the company faced financial ruin due to some hair-brained scheme of the elder Kuno or from having to pay out shush money to the siblings' numerous injury and molestation victims.

This time however there would be no silencing the victim with a payoff. The Kunos were now the instigators of a major international incident and the French Ambassador was baying for the three nutcases' blood. Even worse several of the company's most lucrative contracts were with France-based firms which were now threatening to drop them due to this insult. If the companies did manage to break their contracts Kuno Enterprises would be ruined and that was something the board absolutely couldn't let happen. They owed it to the hundreds of stockholders to see that the company survived this.

For the sake of the company the Kunos had to be dealt with once and for all.

&&&

The sounds and smells of carnage hung heavy in the air over the small village.

Without warning they came, descending on the sleeping populace in the wee hours of the morning. Hundreds of demons, of all shapes and sizes, swarmed through the huts killing and maiming as they went. The villagers, long used to sudden demon attacks, found themselves overwhelmed by their enemy's sheer numbers. Swords, arrows, and various farm tools were useless against such powerful foes and soon the ground ran red with blood. Realizing their helplessness the remaining villagers fled towards the meager protection the temple on the hill offered. Strangely the demons stopped following the fleeing humans as soon as they passed the village's last hut.

The only defenders who were having any luck were the small band of shard hunters but they too would soon be overwhelmed by the dark horde; as soon as they killed one another three took its place. Even now they were being forced towards the center of the village and away from any road of escape.

From his perch atop one of the outlying huts Naraku watched the carnage he had orchestrated with cool approval. This was turning out far better than he had dared hope for and he congratulated himself on not using one of his puppet likenesses; it wouldn't have been nearly as satisfying watching this bloody hell through fake eyes. Soon, soon he would have everything he desired; the group's shards, Kikyo, and the pleasure of staining his hands with that silver-haired half breed's blood. Before entering into this battle every demon within his army had been warned; no one was to harm Inuyasha, the pleasure of killing the dog-eared boy was Naraku's alone. Any demon that disobeyed this order would die a slow and painful death.

Finally he grew weary of merely watching and descended into the carnage. Casually he strolled across ground littered with the dead and dying, lightly stepping over severed limbs and discarded organs towards his goal. Demons drew away as he approached not wanting to attract Naraku's attention. Even the largest demon feared this fur wrapped figure as they did no other. Without a single word to his minions Naraku stopped about fifteen feet away from the exhausted fighters.

"Naraku." Inuyasha rasped. The half demon was exhausted; fighting blood thirsty demons while pregnant was incredibly draining. All he wanted right now was a hot bath, food, and a good long nap. Unfortunately for him it looked like his wishes weren't going to happen any time soon. His soul cried out again for his mate, just as he had done from the very moment this bloodbath had

started. (RANMA! RANMA I NEED YOU! RANMA!!)

“Ah Inuyasha, how wonderful to see you again, and in such a blooming condition too.” Behind the baboon mask eyes swept down the silver haired demon’s pregnant body.

Instinctively Inuyasha curled protectively around his rounded belly which caused Naraku to chuckle softly. “How could you let yourself get into such a condition? The great Inuyasha with child, what did you do, did you spread your legs like some common whore?”

Inuyasha snarled but did nothing to retaliate against the laughing cloaked demon. He knew Naraku was goading him, trying to get the dog demon to strike out at him in anger. Inuyasha was tired of playing this game but at the moment was powerless to stop it. Naraku had all the advantages right now. (RANMA!)

Behind him Sango and Miroku both jerked forwards, wanting to protect their vulnerable companion from the twisted demon but found their way blocked by none other than Kirara. The cat demon swung her head from side to side.

&&&

Bounding over the busy streets and buildings Ranma left the police station far behind, so intent upon answering his mate’s desperate plea the martial artist was reaching speeds he’d never before achieved. Many people who felt the whoosh of air his passing created only saw a glowing blue form already disappearing into the distance. Those sensitive to the use of Chi were nearly driven into unconsciousness by the sheer levels Ranma was putting out as he drew closer to his goal. Thankfully the tourists and local visitors to the shire had departed an hour ago so no one was present to question the sudden arrival of an enraged cat demon surrounded by a field of electric blue Chi. He nearly tore the poor door to the well house right off its hinges as he passed.

Ranma now stood on the well’s lip, blue eyes glowing with Chi driven fire in the dim light. Here was the way to his mate, the way to Inuyasha’s time and according to the dog demon only he and Kagome could cross it. Well, he’d just see about that! He was Lord of Cats and he wanted through and wanted through now!!

He jumped into the well and immediately felt its magic responding to him, swirling about his body and propelling him back to the time of feudal Japan. With a cat’s grace he landed on the soft bone littered well bottom.

Within seconds every sense, normal, Chi, and demonic, came alive and began relaying critical information to his brain. He could hear the far off screams and roars, smelt the heavy scent of blood, fire, and what could only be the fetid stench of demons lacing the gusting winds. Ranma hopped to the very top of the tallest nearby tree, using his Neko Kihin* technique to balance on a branch no bigger around than his smallest finger, and narrowed his concentration, focused in on one particular patch of silver and red. Rage boiled up in his soul, changing his aura from blue to a deep savage red, as he saw his beloved mate on the ground with some weirdo in a white fur cloak looming over him. Naraku, it had to be him.

Black ears laid flat along his skull, tail fur bristling, Ranma let out a blood curdling roar that sent birds flying in fear, shook the surrounding trees, and sent the earth to rumbling for miles in every direction before racing to his mate’s defense.

Down below every demon and village defender froze, even Naraku stopped in his tracks, at the hair raising sound coming from the woods. A brilliant blood red light was spreading through the forest, growing brighter as its source grew quickly closer. Some of the lesser demons grew frightened and began edging away from the approaching threat while their stronger, more aggressive kin, held their ground and waited. When at last the light’s source cleared the last tree

even the largest demon gave a shudder of fear.

Wrapped in a swirling mantle of lava-hot red Chi the figure was obviously that of a cat demon or perhaps half demon. Blazing hate-filled eyes fixed on Naraku's masked face and once again the roar blasted through the early morning air made all the more frightening by the proximity of origin.

Strangely every cat demon on the battlefield began to back away from the newcomer bowing as they did so.

Golden eyes widened in recognition as they focused on the newcomer. It couldn't be...Ranma was human...this was clearly a demon...but the scent...the flare of power over their bond. Levering himself up to get a clearer view Inuyasha decided this was indeed his mate who had somehow defied time itself to come to his rescue.

"RANMA!!" He screamed again.

"INUYASHA!!" Came Ranma's answering call before he leapt into battle.

This wasn't the Ranma Saotome that of the inhabitants of Nerima would recognize, not even to those who had been there atop Mount Phoenix and witnessed the epic battle between the young martial artist and the immortal phoenix god Saffron. No, this was Ranma the enraged Demon Lord coming to the defense of his endangered mate and nothing, living or dead, was going to stand in his way.

The remaining village defenders could only watch in horrified fascination as this stranger, blazing like the heart of a furnace, tore through the ranks of demons like they were helpless rabbits. Now it was the demons who screamed, whose black blood stained the red-soaked soil, whose bodies and parts of bodies went flying through the smoke laced air. Neither their strength in numbers, powers, or fierceness could aid them in facing this new arrival in combat and live to tell the tale.

Ranma didn't waste his skill on these creatures; no fancy moves were required to finish these monsters off. Naraku would be the one his training would be needed to deal with.

The demons Ranma left standing had finally had enough, not even their fear of Naraku could make them face this new and terrible fighter. They broke ranks and ran, leaving the fur clad demon to face Ranma alone.

"I take it that you are Inuyasha's mate." Naraku stepped forwards, seemingly completely unconcerned that Ranma had done away with most of his demon army and drove away the rest.

"I am. And you must Naraku, Inuyasha's told me a lot about you." Ranma's voice remained calm and even. Now those who had fought Ranma before would be immediately on edge; Ranma was at his most dangerous when he was completely calm.

"You came through the well," Naraku noticed the sleek texture of Ranma's shirt reminded him of Kagome's clothes. "That means you must have a shard."

Kagome straitened and focused her special senses on the new arrival, searching for signs that he had part of the stone in his possession. Her eyes widened; he didn't have a shard! How did he cross through the well if he didn't have a shard to open the way?

Ranma smirked. "No shard, I don't need some piece of crystal junk to make me stronger. It just shows how weak you truly are if you have to use those things."

Naraku's eyes narrowed. "Then how did you cross the barrier?"

Ranma took a step forwards. "Inuyasha called me, and I came," the martial artist took a step towards the fur wrapped demon. "Now I get to kick your sorry ass." And with that the battle was joined.

Inuyasha and his companions could only watch as Ranma and Naraku clashed. Just barely thirty seconds into the battle it was abundantly clear to everyone present that their old foe was severely outclassed. Ranma was by far faster, stronger, and more skilled in personal combat than Naraku who was accustomed to using others to fight his battles for him. That wasn't to say that Naraku was helpless it merely meant that the fur cloaked demon was now forced to rely on skills he hadn't been bothered enough to use before now.

Ranma grinned like the proverbial Cheshire cat has he dodged one of his opponent's sword attacks. He'd been itching to try out some of his more destructive techniques on a real opponent and this was just too golden an opportunity to pass up. Besides Naraku needed to pay for all the pain and suffering he had inflicted on Ranma's silver haired mate which he would be only too happy to collect.

Naraku felt his rage growing as this strange boy from the future dodged his blows like they were a child's strikes. Obviously stronger measures were required here as one hand reached into his robe for the small globe with its buzzing occupants.

Ranma saw the object Naraku threw at him and if possible his grin grew even wider, threatening to split his face in half. The hoard of poisonous wasps flew out of their tiny home and headed directly for their master's enemy. However Naraku was unaware that Ranma had once trained using stinging wasps and had only gotten faster since gaining control of the Neko Ken, Hands moving at impossible speed he deftly killed each and every one of the flying menaces before they even came close to stinging him.

"Is that all you've got?" Ranma asked as the last severed wasp body fell twitching to the earth.

Naraku was too astonished to react to this new enemy's question. The sheer speed this Ranma possessed was impossible, no one, demon or human, could move that fast.

"Well, I guess it's my turn now!" And Ranma really let it loose.

Using the Neko Tsume* he shredded that stupid monkey cloak to tiny shreds and crisscrossed the newly exposed flesh with deep bloody slashes. Not giving Naraku any time to recover Ranma switched to the Moyasu Tsume* and further adorned his enemy's injured body with claw marks that steamed and bubbled as the damaged area burned from the injected Ki before suddenly freezing and splitting open as his latest move, the Mienaku Sura Fubuki*, swept the demon up in a contained blizzard cold tornado. The young martial artist allowed the storm to lift his opponent up over 70 feet before abruptly cutting off the uplifting winds. Feral satisfaction filled his heart as Naraku hit the ground with a sickening crunch.

"As fun as this is I've got other stuff to do so I don't have anymore time to play." Ranma took a couple of steps towards his fallen foe, his aura producing so much heat the ground beneath his feet turned to lava at his touch.

"Let's finish this." By now an eight foot area around Ranma had transformed into a boiling cauldron of fiery hell straight from the deepest pits of the underworld.

Naraku, little more than a bloody mangled mess in a vaguely human form, managed to lift his head, the one remaining intact eye struggling to focus on his soon to be executioner.

"FUSHICHO FUNKA ARASHI!!!"*

His battle aura, supernova bright, whipped the air about his body up to hurricane speed, pulling up the pooled lava to create a hellstorm which with a casual flick of one hand Ranma sent spinning directly towards his fallen foe. Naraku had just a few seconds to realize his fate before he was engulfed.

Watching the flames do their work Ranma felt absolutely no guilt or remorse for his actions today; he wasn't killing a man this was more like putting down some dangerously rabid animal. Naraku had murdered, either directly or by use of his minions, hundreds in his quest for power. And it wasn't like there was anyone here who would contest his right to kill this piece of filth.

Too badly beaten to escape by physical means and suddenly bereft of the magical support his collection of shards bestowed upon him Naraku was helpless. He writhed and screamed as the flames ate away at his body, devouring the many demon spirits that had sustained him for so long. Some purifying element infused Ranma's attack the likes of which he had never experienced before. It would be the last snippet of thought that he would have before his spiritual core was destroyed.

In the space of a minute the once powerful half demon was reduced to a pile of stinking smoldering ash.

Miroku gasped, doubling over, clutching his cursed hand tightly to his chest as a burning sensation coursed through his palm before fading away as suddenly as it came. Hardly daring to believe what he thought might've happened the monk slowly removed the warding beads and glove. Where there had once been a jagged black hole leading to an endless inescapable void now resided smooth unblemished flesh.

His curse was GONE!!

Tears of unparalleled joy coursed down his dirt smudged face.

He was free! HE WAS FREE!!

Kagome of course was totally oblivious to her companion's newfound freedom. Her attention was totally focused on this newcomer Ranma. While he hadn't possessed any shards when he first arrived the boy was sure packing them now; a whole mess load of shards if her senses were right! In fact it was same level of power she'd felt from Naraku earlier before this bozo had showed up and turned him into a pile of nasty looking dust. That meant that Ranma had somehow taken Naraku's shards.

Meanwhile Ranma had turned his attention to his downed mate.

"Inuyasha." He knelt besides his silver-haired love and gathered the trembled hayou into his arms.

"You came..." Inuyasha's golden eyes were brilliant in the morning light.

"You called out to me." Ranma nuzzled his face against those twitching silver ears.

"You heard me? Even though the well?"

"Yep."

Ranma helped Inuyasha to his feet, steadying his exhausted lover till he regained enough balance to stand on his own. Inuyasha clung to him, unwilling after the events of the last few hours to release his mate.

“Ranma...there’s something I’ve gotta tell you.” Inuyasha whispered against his mate’s neck.

“What’s that?”

“You’re going to be a daddy.”

Blue eyes blinked, froze, and blinked several more times. “You’re...pregnant?”

“Yeah...are you angry?” he asked timidly, half frightened to hear the answer.

Ranma was stunned speechless. When he became Inuyasha’s mate Ranma had given up on the dream of having children of his own blood. Oh, there ways around the problem that same sex couples faced in starting a family but Ranma was extremely unwilling to attempt any one of them. The thought of having some women carrying his son or daughter was frightening in itself; any surrogate untrained in the arts would be extremely vulnerable to attack by any one of his wacko ex-fiancées and that old hag Cologne would literally jump at the chance to kidnap one his kids for her tribe. And while the baby would be his it wouldn’t carry any of his beloved Inuyasha’s traits. Adopting sounded good but Ranma doubted there was anyone insane enough, even in Nerima, to give two demons a baby to raise. Now here was Inuyasha telling him that he was going to be a father. But that should be impossible; the silver haired demon was most definitely male. But he was also a demon so maybe that was what made the difference. Well he wasn’t about to quibble about it, not when the results were so wonderful!

A warm smile touched Ranma’s face, love for his mate and child sparkling in his eyes. “No...I’m not angry...just so damn happy!” For a few moments the two just held onto each other, basking in their mutual love and the growing life within the silver haired demon. Then Ranma pulled away and went stone cold, the very air around him crackling with suppressed energy. Feline eyes searched the remaining humans till he found the girl wearing a modern school uniform.

“Kagome, I’ve got a deal for you.” He said with a frigid voice.

Brown eyes narrowed as Kagome slowly got to her feet. “And what’s that?”

“A trade. You get the shards I lifted off old monkey boy before I fried him.”

“And what do you want in return?”

“You remove that damned necklace from around Inuyasha’s neck.”

“What!?!???” Remove the necklace? But how was she supposed to control Inuyasha? Even though Naraku was gone there were still some shards to collect and it was pretty much a guarantee that whatever demon possessed them wasn’t going to give them up willingly. She’d need the half demon’s strength and blade to complete the task. But if Inuyasha wasn’t under her command he could just up and leave them, leave her! What then??

“And if I refuse?”

Ranma smirked, baring long sharp fangs. “Then I just scatter these little baubles to the four winds and let you spend the rest of your life hunting the stupid things down.” He bounced a small leather bag up and down in his hand a couple of times, each bounce going a little higher into the air for emphasis.

“You can’t do that!” She screamed. “If any demon found them...think of the lives that’ll be put in danger!!”

“The lives of my mate and child are what matter to me!” Suddenly Ranma’s face was just inches

away from hers; Kagome never even saw him move. "I don't give squat about your quest! Or about you!"

And Kagome could see it was true, see it reflected there in this boy's, no man's, faintly glowing blue feline eyes. If it came down to choosing between Inuyasha and all those people whose lives would be placed in jeopardy by those scattered shards he would choose the half demon without a second thought. Weighing her options Kagome realized she really didn't have a choice here and under Ranma's piercing gaze she moved to fulfill her part of the bargain. Inuyasha couldn't help but gasp as the girl pulled his long silver hair out of the way before lifting the string of beads up and away. The moment the beads were completely free of his body they glowed and fell apart, bouncing slightly on the ground as they did so.

"There, the mutt's yours," she glared and thrust out her hand towards Ranma. "I've done my part, now give me the shards!"

"Gladly." He deposited the little pouch in her palm only to grab the girl's wrist in a crushing grip before she could retreat. Yanking her forwards his other hand wrapped around her delicate neck with bruising force. "Just keep this in mind girl; Inuyasha is my mate, he's carrying my child, if you ever, EVER threaten them again I'll forget my rule on hitting non martial artists and flatten you." He whispered in her ear. And he meant it too. Ranma was thru with playing nice, he had his family to think of now.

Kagome shivered beneath his steely gaze, too frightened to even speak, and nodded in agreement.

Thankfully that was enough to satisfy Ranma. Releasing the girl he turned his attention back to his mate. "Will you come back with me? Back to my time? It's not safe for you here."

Weary from his exertions and growing pregnancy Inuyasha nodded and allowed Ranma to scoop him up into his arms and headed off towards the well and home at an easy lope, completely unaware that someone, actually several people, were tagging along behind him.

Throughout the little drama being played out between Kagome and Ranma Myoga and Kirara were having a quiet little discussion. The flea demon's loyalty lay with Inuyasha and therefore extended to his mate and he was the only one who knew what other secrets lay within Inutaisho's grave. Kirara, being a cat demon, was naturally obliged to follow Ranma her new Lord and her heart still was urging to protect Inuyasha and his unborn kit. It took very little words to agree upon where their duties lie. Both demons nodded to each other and began following the departing pair, Myoga riding between the cat demon's perked ears. Their move wasn't without a witness.

Shippo watched the two older demons as they started following Inuyasha and the new demon Ranma. He'd heard the black haired cat demon's words and knew that Inuyasha probably wouldn't be returning if he left. But how was he to be a big brother if the baby demon wasn't even here with him? And there were so many fantastic things in the future! All the wonders Kagome had described for him, not to mention all those great tasting foods and mouth-watering sweets they made there! With a quick hop the little fox demon grabbed a hold of one of Kirara's swinging tails and scrambled onto her broad back.

Look out future, here comes Shippo!

Kaede, Sango, Miroku, and Kagome watched the small group as they headed off towards the woods and the gateway back to modern Tokyo.

&&&

At his office Dr. Tofu read the file once again and shook his head in astonishment and disgust. Nodoka Saotome certainly had a lot of explaining to do. Just as he thought the tests he'd had run on the samples from Ranma and his parents conclusively proved that Genma couldn't possibly be Ranma's biological father. Whoever the man Nodoka had chosen to be the boy's father wasn't even fully Japanese; the DNA clearly containing elements found in those of European descent.

He wondered how the woman had chosen this mystery man, was he some long time friend or lover, or did she just chose the best looking man in a bar and ply him with enough booze so that he wouldn't remember anything in the morning.

Did she even remember who the man was? Damn! What if she didn't remember? Ranma might never meet his real father if that was the case.

Well, deciding that sitting here speculating wasn't going to solve anything. Best to go to the source. With that decided Tofu picked up the telephone and put in a call to the police.

&&&

The trip through the well was slightly disorienting for Shippo and Kirara but neither one was about to complain about it. Ranma continued to carry his mate even after their safe arrival. Outside the well house the unusual group were met by Ranma's five feline servants who bowed and greeted their returned Lord.

"Inuyasha, I'd like you to meet the gang." Ranma used his tail to point at each of the cats as he named them.

Lotus was a sleek seal-point Siamese with piercing turquoise eyes and had the dubious honor of being the youngest female in the group. She possessed the most people friendly personality despite her abandonment on the streets by her previous owners who couldn't stand her almost nonstop chatter. She was the acrobat, the one always willing to take the most precarious perch or route home.

Pitch was a big alley cat tom whose coat was blacker than black and watched the passing world through baleful yellow eyes. He was probably the most experienced fighter; his body marked and ears scarred ragged from his many battles.

Not normally seen much in Japan's alleys Max was a stout American Shorthair whose military owner lost him during his transfer back stateside. Max had a more open attitude when compared to his fellow toms but was still a strong fighter and was willing to take orders from the group's leader.

The lone Japanese bobtail was Athea. The tortoise shell queen was frequently the group's voice of reason, encouragement, or admonishment. If there was any cat in the small band who could claim to be its heart it was Athea. Pitch often times called her 'Mother' but never within earshot, or her strike range.

Each of the four cats were larger than normal for their kind but the largest feline by far, weighing over 25 pounds, was its leader who went by the name Lord Ranma had bestowed upon him; Godzilla. He was meant to be a goodwill present for a visiting Ambassador's daughter but when the cat couldn't take anymore of the brat's harsh abuse he fled into the wild alleys of Japan. As a Ragdoll he possessed a thick coat of beige with seal points and cold blue eyes. Harsh treatment at the hands of humans had soured his once sweet disposition and now the tom was a rather dour and sometimes even savage personality which only softened when the other cats or his Lord were around.

Godzilla was the first to rise from his bow and noted the disheveled state of his Lord and the one

his Lord seemed so protective about. //Welcome back my Lord. // He offered a shorter bow to Ranma's other companions. //You have brought strange ones with you, who are they? //

"This is my mate Inuyasha." Ranma introduced the silver haired demon first.

Five sets of feline eyes widened. //My Lord, is he a...a...canine? //

"Dog Demon actually. You got a problem with that?" The martial artist tensed, eyes narrowed.

//No my Lord, // Godzilla was quick to advert his Lord's growing anger. //It is not our place to question our Lord's choice in mates. If he pleases you then we are satisfied and will accept him as part of your Pride. //

Crisis adverted Ranma took his odd little band back to Tofu's home.

"Where're we going Ranma?" Inuyasha asked as his mate turned away from Kagome's home and headed out into the city hopping lazily from rooftop to rooftop.

"I'm staying with my new father and brother. Dr. Tofu adopted me into his clan; I'm officially an Ono now. You'll like Tofu, he's really a very intelligent and caring man, and he's an absolutely great healer. If there's anyone in this century that can see that you and our baby are healthy and stay that way it'll be him." Ranma's tail swung around to curl protectively around his mate's expanded waistline.

"If you trust and believe in him that much then so will I."

The trip to the Ono home was very short and Ranma hopped down soundlessly into the garden despite his burden. Inuyasha was well pleased by what he saw of the well ordered and beautiful grounds and the buildings clean neat lines; yes, this was a very good den, his mate had chosen well.

Gathered in the dojo they sat down to talk about everything that had happened in their lives since they parted. Inuyasha was immensely pleased with Ranma's new demon status and even more so with his mastering of the Neko Ken. But he was a little confused as to how Ranma had acquired the title of Lord of the Northern Lands.

Myoga chose this moment to break into the conversation. "Actually there is something Ranma must do before he can fully claim his title as Lord of the Northern Lands. He must undergo the ritual of blood ascension."

"Blood ascension? That doesn't sound very pleasant Myoga." Inuyasha growled at the flea demon.

"Nevertheless till Ranma performs the ceremony the full range of powers his title will bestow on him won't be available." For once the little demon wasn't about to back down as he had in the face of Inuyasha's wrath before. "Your brother Sesshoumaru performed the same ritual when he claimed your father's title as Lord of the Western Lands. But without the Tetsusaiga he'll never have the full range of power that your father did."

"Okay, so I gotta do this mumbo-jumbo and I'll really be the Lord of Cats. What do I have to do?"

"Within the tomb of Inuyasha's father lies the Neko dagger, given to Lord Inutaisho for safe keeping by the previous Lord of Cats. The two lords were close friends and Lord Nekon died protecting Lord Inutaisho's back in battle. Since Lord Nekon had no living heirs he entrusted the dagger to your father claiming that one day his rightful heir would receive it from Inutaisho's true hearted son."

Inuyasha's fingers dipped into his inner pouch and pulled out an insignificant looking black pearl from its depths. "So we have to go back to the old man's grave huh? Okay, but we only stay long enough to pick up the dagger and come right back out." He sat the pearl on the ground, unsheathed Tetsusaiga and tapped the blade's tip against the tiny dark orb.

Ranma, Kirara, and Shippo, having never seen the entrance to Inutaisho's grave jumped back when the black portal swirled into view. "That's where your dad's buried? Inside there?!!"

"Yeah, don't worry though, there's nothing inside that'll hurt us." Inuyasha assured his mate.

&&&

Okay, flying through the skies on the back of a skeletal demon bird while inside a magical black pearl certainly made it's way onto Ranma's top ten 'weird things that have happened to me' list. And given his previous history that was saying an awful lot. Lord Inutaisho, Inuyasha's father, was a LOT bigger than Ranma had believed possible despite his mate's warning and it gave him the willies to fly through the immense skull's gaping jaws.

Once inside however Myoga had taken the lead, guiding the little band down farther into the skeleton, bypassing the area where the fang sword had once rested. Down they went until they found a large door carved with images of all manner of dog demons. One touch of Inuyasha's hand and the obviously heavy doors swung open. Nothing could have prepared the group for what they had found there.

Obviously Lord Inutaisho had stored away much of his accumulated riches within his tomb for the large chamber was filled with gold and jewels. Inuyasha couldn't believe his eyes. There was more than enough wealth spread out before him to see to his family's comfort and security for several generations. If they wanted he and Ranma could purchase their own estate and live in the lap of luxury for the rest of their lives. And at the center of the room, atop a stone pillar adored with carved cats, lay the Nekon dagger resting in its simple leather sheath. While Inuyasha and Shippo gathered up some of the treasure to take back with them Ranma retrieved the dagger. The minute his hand touched the blade's pommel he felt a rush of power run through him.

Now here they were back at the dojo listening as Myoga explained to Ranma what he must do. Ranma was a bit scared but wasn't about to back down. Being a true Demon Lord would give him an extra edge when it came to protecting his new family. According to Myoga, Shippo, and his mate the vast majority of demons they might encounter would back down immediately when confronted by a Demon Lord. Only the ones that were too stupid or too arrogant would be left for Ranma to deal with.

Ranma nodded in understanding and the little flea demon stepped back to give the young Lord room.

Drawing the dagger from its sheath the martial artist brought the blade to rest against his open palm. Ranma barely even flinched as he drew the sharp edge across his flesh, bright red blood welling up in its wake. The procedure was preformed on the other palm just as easily. Claspng his bleeding hands together with the blade between them Ranma began chanting, the words just seemed to pop into his head seconds before he said them.

&&&

All around the globe every feline, from the smallest domestic housecat to the largest Siberian tiger, raised their heads and vocally paid homage to their new Lord. People in rural villages, towns, and big cities stopped in puzzled astonishment as the air filled with the overwhelming sound of yowling cats...

The noise level was deafening at the annual cat show as the exhibitors struggled to restrain their joyously screeching purebreds...

Zookeepers rushed to the cat exhibits to check on their suddenly loud charges...

Circus workers shook and scratched their heads in amazement as the big cats in their care roared and yowled in feline harmony...

Wildlife experts scrambled to record the totally bizarre phenomenon of virtually every species of cat residing on the Serengeti beginning to vocalize simultaneously without any clear reason...

&&&

Ranma rumbled softly in pleasure as his new subjects welcome washed over him, the sensation successfully distracting him as the final step in his transformation settled onto his body.

Inuyasha watched in silent awe as his mate officially assumed the mantle of the Lord of the Northern Lands. Awash in the power released by the ascension spell the ranking marks on Ranma's cheeks deepened in color and more pronounced as the crescent on his forehead permanently phased into sight. Now every demon or person who could perceive demons would know of Ranma's position and woe be to anyone who failed to show him the proper respect.

Ranma's changes weren't completely limited to his body; his clothes were equally affected. The simple leather arm bracers Ranma wore morphed into finely crafted metal ones, their surface covered with ornately designed felines and ancient symbols. As the ceremony came to a close the dagger fell from Ranma's limp hands and clattered on the wooden floor. He swayed a bit before falling to his knees. Inuyasha was quick to catch him before he could hit the floor face first. Blue eyes met golden ones.

"Well that was a rush..." Ranma moaned before fainting.

&&&

Going to the shopping mall used to be one of Akane's favorite activities, now she was beginning to loathe the sight of the building. Ever since being introduced to her new therapist her life had been nothing but an unending hell. The sadistic woman controlled every aspect of her life; where she went, what she ate, and what she spoke or did. If she believed Akane had done something wrong, not that the Tendo girl had done anything which someone could possibly consider wrong, Clyde would punish her.

Akane tried to make her see reason, tried to make her see that there was nothing wrong with her. But the woman simply wouldn't listen!

Akane even tried to beat some sense into Clyde but after being knocked senseless five or six times before she even got in one blow the Tendo girl backed off that particular approach.

(Cheating bitch!) Akane thought as she glared at Clyde who was engrossed in reading her magazine. (She couldn't have beaten me without cheating. She's not a martial artist!)

They were sitting in one of the mall's lunch areas after having just finished a meal of ramen. Normally Akane would be sitting with her friends, but Clyde had expressly forbidden her from even contacting Yuka and the others. She wasn't even allowed to talk to her family. Soun tried to visit her once, even got into an argument with the therapist and used his Demon Head technique. Clyde just laughed before punching out the older martial artist and tossing his body into a nearby dumpster.

“How long are we going to stay here?” Akane asked.

“You need to develop patience my dear,” Clyde said not even bothering to look up from her reading. “It is a virtue you know.”

“I have patience!” The girl snapped.

Clyde laughed. “You? Have patience? You have as much patience as a rabid dog; it is perhaps your worst fault Akane. It is the main reason you fail at virtually everything you attempt to do, that along with your over inflated ego and blatant inability to accept reality.”

“Why you!! I’ll-ARRGGHHH!!!” Akane lunged at the woman who seemed totally unconcerned at the impending attack and with good reason. One short burst from her customized cattle prod and the violent girl was lying stunned on the floor, limbs twitching from the charge and a bit of drool escaping the corner of her mouth. Clyde gazed down at the girl and made a tired tsk-tsk sound.

“You see Akane? If you truly had patience this wouldn’t happen so often. Really, I’ve already had to discipline you eight times since we arrived and it’s only been two hours.”

By now Akane had regained enough of her senses, though there are plenty of people around who would say she had no sense to speak of at all, to struggle to her feet, using the bench as a support. Brown eyes burning with unmitigated anger the youngest Tendo nearly lunged at the older woman again but stopped when the crackling head of the cattle prod came into view. Growling in frustration Akane reluctantly sat down. Clyde smiled at her young charge; perhaps there was some small shred of hope for the girl but Clyde wasn’t about to risk money on it yet. She’d rather bet on how many more times she’d have to shock the girl before their six hours here at the mall were over.

End Notes:

Neko Kihin = Cat Grace - allows user to walk or balance on any surface no matter how small or capable of supporting their weight.

Neko Tsume = Cat Claws.

Moyasu Tsume = Consume with fire Claws   “ or burning claws   ” Similar to Neko Tsume on a bit of ki is left in the wounds to burn the victim.

Mienaka Sura Fubuki = Cause not to see blizzard   “ basically blinding blizzard   ” creates a localized blinding blizzard of snow, ice, and winds.

Fushicho Funka Arashi = Phoenix Volcanic Eruption Storm   “ killing move!   ” creates a hellstorm of savage wind, fire, and hot lava which encircles and then incinerates its victim.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 9 by cobalt blue

Waking up Ranma grudgingly decided he finally had a headache large enough to equal one of his ex-father’s week-long Sake binge hangovers.

The rush of power he’d experienced when the mantle of the Lord of Cats settled onto his shoulders was greater than anything he’d ever experienced before, not even when Ranma had fought Herb and Saffron. Well, a few select herbs mixed in some hot tea would rid him of this throbbing pain, Dr. Tofu always kept a few packets handy scattered around the house and Dojo. And speaking of Dr. Tofu... wasn’t that his voice? Turning over he saw his mate being examined by Tofu while being watched by Mousse, Kasumi, his cats, and the Demons who accompanied he and Inuyasha back to present time. From the looks of it Tofu had already treated the silver haired demon’s injuries from his battle in the ancient village and was now checking over his gravid condition.

“Have you had any pains or swelling in your joints?” The good doctor asked his newest patient as gentle hands probed and measured the swell of his midsection.

“No.” Inuyasha replied calmly, golden eyes watching the healer’s hands move over his body.

“Any cravings?”

Inuyasha snorted. “Plenty of those.”

“That’s good; it’s your body’s way of telling you what it needs. Please try to eat whatever you get a craving for.”

“Just let me know what you want Inu-chan and I will see that it’s picked up on my next shopping trip.” Kasumi said sweetly as she continued to work Kirara’s thick pelt with a stiff brush sending the demon cat into a fit of ecstatic purring. Myoga was setting on the pretty lady’s shoulder enjoying the sweet smell of her perfume and soft melodic voice. She’d been so kind to them, offering them tea and food and never once showing any fear stemming from their Demon status. The long haired young man was just as hospitable. Right now he had Shippo on his lap and was showing the little fox demon some form of the slight of hand trick much to the enjoyment of the youngster.

The five cats were watching the group, especially Dr. Tofu, while making their way thru the large bowls of fresh shredded tuna and milk Kasumi had provided for them. So long as these new humans weren’t making any threatening moves towards their Lord or their Lord’s mate they were willing to let matters continue till told otherwise.

“So how are they Doc?” Ranma said, voice a little rougher than his human family had last heard it.

“Ranma!” Inuyasha exclaimed, pulling away from Doctor Tofu and scrambling over to his mate. For a few minutes the two were totally consumed with each other, kissing, stroking and nuzzling. They forgot about their audience, forgot about the problems that they would face from Ranma’s fiancées and enemies, all that mattered was that they were together. Only when Doctor Tofu cleared his throat to gain their attention did they reluctantly pull away from each other.

“Glad to see you’re awake Ranma, how do you feel?” Ever the physician Tofu’s first thoughts were naturally to his adopted son’s health.

“Got a killer headache but other than that fine.” He grinned lopsidedly at the older man.

“Oh my! I’ll fix you some tea right away Ramna!” Kasumi said and pulled out one of the familiar herb packets from her apron and added it to the tea kettle on the tray besides her. That was one of the things that constantly amazed Ranma about the oldest Tendo sister; her ability to be ready for just about any household situation. Soon he was drinking the dark mixture, feeling the relief from the awful pounding begin just from inhaling the thick steam rising from the cup.

“Inuyasha is fine Ranma but I do want to run a couple of tests and an ultrasound as soon as possible.”

“But you said he’s fine, what’s up?”

“Nothing really to worry about Ranma, I just want to verify that his internal makeup is the same as a woman’s. The less differences we have to deal with the safer Inuyasha and the baby will be.”

That sounded very reasonable to the young Lord and he nodded his head in agreement. He

wanted the best possible care for his growing family and Ranma knew without a shadow of a doubt that care couldn't possibly come from anyone except Dr. Tofu. If the man said they needed an ultrasound then they needed an ultrasound.

"Ranma what's an ultrasound?" His mate asked. Ranma opened his mouth to reply and quickly shut it again; he didn't know either.

&&&

Downtown, in the police station where Ranma had turned Genma in a long overdue meeting was about to take place.

Genma groaned as he slowly came back to consciousness. Damn that ungrateful boy! How dare he go out and develop new techniques without sharing them with his father! It was the boy's duty, and Genma's right as an acknowledged Master of their style, to teach his father any move he learned or developed. Not that the older martial artist could actually perform the majority of them but it was the principle of the matter. Opening his eyes Genma became alarmed as he recognized his surroundings...

Most police holding cells appeared much alike no matter what part of the world they were situated in.

Well, this wasn't anything new to him; Genma had broken out of dozens of cells in his years on the road. Reaching for the thick lock he'd just...

"YEEAARGGHH!!" The fat martial artist screamed and a huge jolt of electricity coursed through his body the second he touched the metal. Somehow he managed to wrench free and fell heavily to the concrete floor. Looking at his hands Genma was surprised to see several first and second degree burns marring the flesh of both palms.

"How...?" he gasped.

"The entire cell is wired to deliver a heavy electrical charge to anyone who touches the bars without proper shielding," said the officer who slowly walked into view. "And the walls, ceiling, and floor are titanium reinforced."

"I am Captain Tenchi Misato, head of Tokyo's Special Crimes Unit, and you Genma Saotome are under arrest for a list of crimes too numerous for me to recite from memory."

Genma immediately broke out into a heavy sweat. "S-Sa-Saotome? I..I don't know who you're talking about. My name is Gato!"

"There's no use lying Saotome. We've already checked your fingerprints and dental records. A young man brought you in and once your identity was verified the decision was made to house you here. You know, we have quite an extensive record on you Saotome, and frankly I'm disgusted to even stand within the same building as you but at least I have the satisfaction of knowing I'm not alone in my nausea. We're having a terrible time finding someone to defend you; every lawyer that reads your file gets sick, pukes, and leaves. It's happened so much the janitorial staff are threatening to go on strike." The police Captain began pacing outside the martial artist's cell, not even looking at Genma anymore.

"You know you should feel extremely lucky to be in that cell. Only I and the station chief have the access codes to deactivate this little get up otherwise half the division would be here beating you to a bloody pulp. As it is you'll have to be placed in permanent solitary confinement once you're convicted and sent to prison; it'll be the only way we'll be able to keep you alive long enough to serve your hopefully life sentence."

“Con-convicted?... Prison?” Genma gulped audibly.

“Someone will be by later to deliver you’re dinner, hope you’re not expecting anything fancy.” At that Captain Misato smiled maliciously. The meals chosen for this particular prisoner were the smallest, blandest, and most disgusting appearing the police could dream up without asking that little Tendo bitch to cook. After all he was a prisoner and it wasn’t their job to pamper the man by providing him with the huge gourmet meals the glutton obviously craved. He only wished he could stay a bit longer and see the fat bastard’s face when he found out who his cellmate was, watching a video recording wasn’t nearly as satisfying as observing the event as it happened. Misato just hoped she stuck to bruising and restrained herself from trying for broken bones. If only he didn’t have to go deal with those wacko Kunos...

Genma watched the officer leave before going back to pondering his situation. With the cell electrified he had no chance of picking the lock. That left him only two options; either jump the guard when his meal was delivered or use one of the Saotome secret techniques to slice the bars and escape. Attacking the guard was the more dangerous since the man might have time to scream before loosing consciousness so that left the second option.

However Genma was unaware of what Ranma had done to him while the fat bastard was unconscious. The laughing young martial had gleefully struck a series of pressure points which would prevent Genma from using even the most basic of martial artist moves, block access to his Ki, and cause him to suffer an absolutely horrible case of painful chronic diarrhea if he ate any portion bigger than what an average four year old child would consume at a meal.

Whether he liked it or not, and he definitely wasn’t going to like it, Genma Saotome would be remaining a ‘guest’ of the Special Crimes Unit indefinitely.

“Well Husband, it appears you no longer have the ability to run and hide from me.” The familiar steel laced feminine voice froze Genma in his tracks, his tattered Gi suddenly sporting a distinctive yellow stain around the crotch. “We have much to discuss...”

No one came to investigate the screams coming from Genma’s cell; they were too busy laughing.

Nabiki growled as she paced in her room. The meeting between her, her lawyer and the District Attorney hadn’t gone well, not well at all. The man wasn’t going for any kind of plea or deal; he was absolutely committed to locking the middle Tendo daughter away for as long as he possibly could. Without a deal in place to lessen her sentence Nabiki was looking at some serious, very serious, jail time; along the lines of twenty-five to thirty-five years. Japan’s courts took a very dim view of child pornography and the fact that she’d used her own sister only made matters worse.

Well, she didn’t want to deal anyway. It was only a stalling measure to buy her some much needed time to think of a way out of this mess. Any amount of prison time was unacceptable; if she couldn’t get off Scott free she’d leave and start life again somewhere else in the world. Several of the underworld organizations she’d had dealings with in the past had offered her a place in their outfits; talented predators of her caliber were very rare and Nabiki was carefully considering which one of the bosses had offered her the best options.

Whichever one she chose Nabiki would cement her new position with a little ‘gift’.

It wouldn’t take much to rile Akane up into a frenzied rage, just a few well placed, and some blatantly truthful, comments about Ranma so-called perversions and Akane’s complete lack of any form of homemaking or martial arts skills, and then turn her loose in the kitchen. She’d already made sure that the refrigerator and cabinets were stocked with all manner of regular and

exotic ingredients and there were several foreign cuisine cookbooks left in plain sight. Having already sold quite a number of previous toxic concoctions her sister called food for a highly lucrative sum Nabiki had no doubts she would do so again. After seeing the devastatingly lethal effects the previous concoctions produced there wasn't an underworld or terrorist organization in the world that wouldn't jump at the chance to lay their hands on whatever potential super bio-weapon Akane managed to create.

The early morning raid on the Kuno mansion wasn't a simple arrest by any means but by the afternoon it had evolved in a full scale multi-division invasion complete with in depth media coverage which eventually was picked up worldwide.

Barely fifteen minutes after their medical treatment and initial arrest all three Kunos obtained, through their wealth and influence, release and beat a hasty retreat to the safety of the Kuno ancestral home. Now hidden within those high thick walls each member of the insane trio wandered off to their private wings where they commenced to lick their wounds and plan their revenge against whoever had dared to besmirch their noble name, not to mention their various pursuits of the pig-tailed girl.

Under the pressure being generated by the French government and with full support of Kuno Enterprise's Board of Governors warrants were issued for Kodachi, Tatewaki, and their palm tree sprouting father. Taking into account the numerous reports dealing with the trio's skills and delusions the Police Chief gathered a special force for the job. Each man was a hard bitten force veteran with no less than a advanced level black belt in the martial arts and equipped them with top of the line gear.

They came well prepared equipment and personal-wise to handle any potential threat they might encounter beyond the mansion's high walls. Unfortunately all this preparation didn't mean a damn thing when in came down to it for what they found was far beyond anyone's expectations... or nightmares.

Later on one officer who'd served in the military before he joined the police shakily described the raid as being the closest thing to full out, life-or-death combat he'd seen since leaving the army. Within twenty seconds of entering the estate's grounds four of the unit's men were downed by a volley of exploding coconuts and gas filled gym balls. Another two suffered broken bones and internal injuries after falling into a twenty foot deep concealed pit. Pressing forwards the remaining police made only another eight yards before three more men were taken down by some strange green mist that seeped through their skin and caused vomiting and convulsions.

Not willing to risk anymore of his men the Captain ordered a retreat and placed a call to both nearby military bases for assistance. The Army and Air Force units went in armed to the teeth, hidden beneath full body armor, and backed by several very nasty looking dogs, armored riot vehicles, and two spotter helicopters. Members of the police force still awake and thinking coherently witnessed the first explosions...

Thirty minutes of gunfire, exploding bombs, gas clouds, and screams later it was over.

Nearly half of the once great Kuno mansion had been demolished, reduced into a smoking pile of rubble. Over three dozen men were injured, seven so critically the hospital doctors feared they wouldn't be able to save their lives. Two riot vehicles were completely destroyed, a feat that the technicians swore couldn't be accomplished without the use of anti-tank weaponry and one helicopter had crashed into a nearby canal after being hit by a razor hoop. One poor dog, much to the grief of his handler, had to be put down on the spot due to the horrendous wounds it received. But the combined forces had achieved their goal; all three Kunos and their servant were now in custody.

Both Tatewaki and Kodachi Kuno had to be restrained and given doses of tranquilizers that would've killed over a dozen average sized people before being carted off to separate high security mental institutes where a full evaluation of their mental status would be performed. The Elder Kuno was given a similar treatment but was transported to a facility at the other end of Japan to lessen the chance he might escape and free his crazed offspring. The ninja Sasuke was sedated for transport to another of the special holding cells like the one currently housing Mr. and Mrs. Saotome till his part in the Kunos transgressions could be verified.

Once the Kunos were shipped off a thorough search was carefully performed on the undamaged portions of the estate and what the police and military found shocked, sickened, and terrified even the most hardened veteran among them.

In Kodachi's personal quarters there were enough drugs and illegal narcotics to keep every addict in Japan on a continuous high for two years. The range of highly dangerous poisons discovered forced the Captain to call the nearby United States air base for assistance in dealing with the lethal chemicals as there was just too much for the on-sight teams to deal with. In Mr. Kuno's quarters the bomb squad was working overtime to safely remove and dispose of the multitude of raw and finished explosive materials harbored there. Tatewaki's rooms were the ones which sent several of the men who had teenage daughters into a killing rage. Festooned all about his private quarters were pictures of naked and half-naked underage girls, most of whom the Captain recognized as being Akane Tendo and Ranma's female form, and pornographic paraphernalia. All Nabiki Tendo's work no doubt. It was only when one of the remaining dogs began clawing frantically at one particular wall panel that the true depth of Tatewaki's perversity was revealed...

Concealed inside the large hidden hall were five young girls that bore a striking resemblance to the two whose pictures littering the outer rooms. Each girl was clad in a gauzy bit of cloth that might pass as clothes on some primitive Polynesian island and their slim necks sported a decorated steel collar. Chained to a heavy loop in the wall the girls had just enough chain length to pace their silk partitioned quarters and reach the tiny area that served as their bathrooms. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that Kuno had been using these poor unwilling young women as his own private harem.

The officers handled the scared and traumatized girls with extreme care and tenderness as they were freed and taken to the hospital for a complete examination. Captain Misato, after watching the last ambulance disappear into the distance, immediately called for a complete investigation into the Kunos dealings with the Nerima police force. There had to be some seriously heavy payoffs going on to keep the Kunos dark illegal dealings secret for this long.

Inuyasha closed his eyes and savored the bit of salmon as it literally melted in his mouth. He'd never tasted cooking this magnificent in all his life; Mousse was indeed a lucky man to have such a talented fiancée just as he was lucky to have such a devoted and talented mate as Ranma for his own. The group had just settled down for a family meal which Kasumi and Ranma spent several hours lovingly preparing. The half demon was amazed and overjoyed at how quickly he, Shippo, Myoga, and Kirara had been accepted by Ranma's new family.

It seemed like it was just seconds after being introduced that Tofu was warmly welcoming Inuyasha to the family, even going so far as hugging the half demon. Kasumi was by far the sweetest, most loving human any of the demons had ever met and they in turn immediately fell in love with her. Myoga was so smitten with the young woman he never once tried to drink her blood though he had plenty of opportunities to do so while riding on her shoulder. Kirara was also taken with Kasumi, especially after the wonderful brushing she'd gotten shortly after their arrival. And Mousse, Kasumi's fiancée, seemed to have formed an immediate bond with Shippo

and was treating the young demon like a son, even going so far as offering to train the little fox in his fighting style. Both Inuyasha and Ranma approved of this since Mousse's Hidden Weapons style would mesh well with the fox demon's natural magics.

Inuyasha was pleasantly surprised at how quickly he and the other demons adjusted to present day life. Having already had previous experience with Ranma's time the silver haired demon took such things as television and microwaves in stride but for Myoga and Shippo they were amazing and perplexing marvels. But with Ranma and his family to help they adjusted after a few days and were soon handling things as if they always had.

As the meal neared its end Mousse once again picked up his battered copy of the Amazon Laws and continued reading.

"What are you reading Mousse, I thought you didn't want anything more to do with the Amazons?" Ranma asked before taking a sip of tea.

"Listening to Inuyasha talk about his past sparked a memory Ranma, something I read a long time ago...Aha! Here it is!" A jubilant expression spread across the long haired martial artist's face as he looked up at his adopted brother. "Ranma, you don't have to worry about Cologne or the Amazons ever again!"

Ranma almost choked on his mouthful of tea. "Wh-what??!"

Hopping over to Ranma's side Mousse pointed out a section of the Amazon code to him. "Read this! Read this!"

Wiping dribbled tea off his chin the young martial artist took the book and scanned the part Mousse wanted him to. After a few seconds a wide grin bloomed on his face too. Seeing the others confused faces Ranma read the particular law aloud.

"In accordance with the treaty of Ko Me no male of the House of the Western Lord, nor any male mated to one of the Western Lord's House, can be subjected to the Kiss of Marriage or the Kiss of Death. Any who disobey this face being cursed and eternal banishment from tribe."

"According to ancient Amazon History Elder Ko Me made a pact with the Lord of Western Lands," Mousse began to explain. "After he aided them in driving back a huge Musk raiding party an agreement was made that should they ever need assistance again against the Musk he would come while Ko Me vowed that no member the Lord's clan would ever be subject to Amazon law. It was a benefit to parties; the Amazons gained a strong ally and the Western Lord had a highly trained band of warriors watching over one of his potential enemies."

Ranma was beginning to really get excited. "Does this mean what I think it means?"

"Yes! Since Inuyasha's father was the Lord of the Western Lands before his death and you're his mate Cologne and Shampoo can't touch you Ranma! If they try the Elder will be cursed and banished, and Shampoo might well be executed since she's already carries a curse."

For his part Mousse was secretly hoping the two warrior bitches would try something. After all the years of abuse and humiliation he'd suffered at their hands, and those of every other tribeswoman, the ex-Amazon male would love to see them get hung by their own stupid laws, that is if Ranma left them alive after whatever idiocy they tried to pull. Maybe if he asked nice enough his brother would allow him to participate in their well deserved bashing or at the very least get the whole thing on video.

"YAHOO!! NO MORE GROPY AMAZONS!!" Ranma whooped, hugging Mousse, tears of joy coursing down his cheeks. With his parents in jail, the Tendos buried under criminal charges,

Happosai permanently crippled, the Kunos facing international ire and their own set of charges, and now the Amazons fettered by their own twisted laws the only ones remaining for Ranma to deal with were Ukyo and Ryoga. The chef would take some planning but Ranma was certain they could work something out. Ukyo generally was the most reasonable of his now former fiancées. Ryoga however would be the real problem, the jackass was too stubborn, and too dangerous, to think anything short of a nuclear bomb could deal with him...but maybe he wouldn't have to. Looking over to where his faithful guards sat polishing off the last of their meal Ranma got an idea.

"Godzilla, I have a task for you and the others tomorrow."

//Whatever it is my Lord we will do. // The huge cat bowed his head.

Nerima is a place of chaos, where virtually anything can, and usually does, happen in the course of the day. The city's inhabitants have learned to deal with this fact by just tuning the whole thing out and going on as if everything was normal; it was much safer for their sanity. Only those who actually got caught up in the madness paid any attention to it.

Some things however just couldn't be ignored.

People in the marketplace turned their heads towards the growing commotion down the street, getting louder as its source drew closer. Squealing in terror a little black piglet wearing a yellow and black bandana was running as fast as his little hooved feet would carry him, just barely keeping ahead of his feline pursuers.

Something more than hunger drove his five hunters, it burned deep in their narrowed eyes, a blazing bonfire fed by unknown knowledge. Even to the most uneducated onlooker it was painfully clear the cats were toying with their prey, prolonging the sweet thrill of the hunt as long as possible before the inevitable, and probably bloody, conclusion. The cats fanned out so as to better control their victim's desperate movements.



Of course not a single soul moved to help the doomed swine. Everyone knew the filthy little porker was the favored pet of Akane Tendo and possessed a violent temper to match its owner's. Usually it was fixated on that poor Saotome boy and would attack, biting and kicking, the young man without the slightest provocation. Then the Tendo girl would turn around and hammer the boy if he raised so much as a finger to defend himself against the obviously insane pig. However his obsession with Ranma didn't stop little P-chan from sinking his fangs into any boy that dared to come within ten feet of his mistress and quite a few male students, many of them the onlookers sons or relatives, at Furinkan High School sported scars from these encounters.

If they were lucky the cats would eat the vicious menace and Nerima would have one less terror to worry about.

So with many sporting smiles on their faces the people in the marketplace went back to their daily business and left the pig to his hopefully most grisly fate.

Ryoga was absolutely exhausted but he didn't dare stop running. Hot on his heels his pursuers drew a bit closer as his flagging strength began to slow him down. Why these damned fur-balls had developed a sudden yearning for a pork dinner he couldn't say Ryoga just wished they'd lose it! The chase had begun over an hour ago when a large black cat jumped him as he snuck through a local market. He managed to shake off his first attacker only to be tackled by two more felines. All three cats gleefully took up the chase after the bandana clad swine and were soon joined by two more, one of whom was the largest feline Ryoga had ever laid eyes on.

With determination bordering on obsession they hunted Ryoga, never giving him a moment's respite, always just a foot or two away from his hindquarters. Several times he had dashed into a restaurant or bath house in an attempt to reach hot water but each time the cats would cut him off. It was almost as if they knew about his curse and were deliberately preventing him from transforming into his human form.

Well he'd run out of all other options save one   fight. Somehow he had to gain enough distance between the cats and himself to make a stand. Even in his exhausted state he should be able to 'persuade' them to leave him alone.

Twisting through a stack of empty crates Ryoga entered into a fenced in empty lot and turned to face his pursuers.

The cats fanned out in a crescent pattern effectively cutting off his only exit. Fur raised, tail bristling, the five felines slowly advanced towards their cornered prey.

Squealing a porcine war cry Ryoga lunged towards the nearest cat. What happened next would haunt the cursed martial artist's dreams to the end of his days.

This wasn't a fight, it was ruthless gang beating. Mercilessly the cats smashed the piglet to the hard ground, clawing and biting at whatever body part came within reach. They batted his body about the lot doing their utmost to smear it through the fence boards. Several times Ryoga tried to put up a defense or just plain escape but each time his assailants merely increased their barrage till he succumbed.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity the striking paws stopped and the cats backed away.

Ryoga was a complete mess. There wasn't an inch of skin on his pig body that didn't sport claw and bite marks and several bones were definitely broken, an amazing feat in itself considering how hard the martial artist's bones were from the breaking point training.

A shadow fell over him and Ryoga cringed away as the mammoth feline stood over him. Glacier cold blue eyes fixed on his remaining open one.

//This is just a warning, // a deep voice echoed eerily in his head. //Attack our Lord again and we will feast on your entrails. //

Lord? What the hell was this animal talking about? And how was he able to talk at all???!!

//Our Lord has given us leave to deal with you as we see fit. Personally I would kill you now and end the threat you represent to his family but our Lord wishes for you to have one last chance to change your ways. // One huge paw came down on his neck, pressing hard, cutting off his windpipe. Ryoga struggled as the world blurred around him. //Remember my words Ryoga Hibiki, cease these stupid attacks upon our Lord Ranma or we'll be dining on pork. //

And with that the cats left. One second they were there the next they were gone.

Ryoga lay there gasping, one thought going through his pain fogged mind.

(RANMA THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT!!!)

Tapping her long manicured nails lightly on her chair's padded armrest the extreme therapist only known as Clyde read over the first part of her typed report.

'Despite repeated attempts to alter her attitude towards the opposite sex Miss Tendo's anger and hatred for the male gender shows virtually no signs of improvement, if anything in my opinion her rage has increased. Her reaction to a male, or males from virtually any age group now, does not differ; all are treated with the same idiotic, and potentially fatal, brutality. The level of rage she displays when confronted by even the most innocent of contacts between the two sexes is astonishing even to one so jaded as myself. I fear that she, if left unchecked, will eventually move from assaulting men to murdering them. If I fail to alter Miss Tendo's violent tendencies, by either increasing her control over them or by eradicating them entirely, she will prove to be far too great a risk to public safety to be allowed freedom of unrestricted movement in even the most sparsely populated areas.'

Clyde truly regretted submitting this recommendation. As a therapist it was her job to help sick individuals such as Akane Tendo straiten out and live happy productive lives. To fail in that task was devastating especially to one who had never lost a patient before. But she had to face the fact that after watching Akane's reaction to their latest outing this was one patient that she stood a good chance of loosing.

Clyde had hoped that by showing the girl how young couples were supposed to act around each other Akane might start to recognize her past mistakes; after all the first step towards a cure was admitting to oneself that there was a problem in the first place. Unfortunately the youngest Tendo was proving to be both too stupid and too stubborn to take that all important first step.

Barely two minutes after entering the park they spotted a young couple kissing Akane lost it and attempted to attack the lovers. Thankfully Clyde had possessed the forethought to put a chocker collar on the girl and after nearly blacking out from suffocation Akane gave up on her charge. Of course that part of the lesson obviously didn't form a lasting impression on the girl for she next tried to clobber a young man who was hugging a smiling teenage schoolgirl. After ten more such attacks Clyde called it quits for the day and hauled the spitting screaming girl out by her leash.

Satisfied with the first paragraph the woman started typing again.

'It is therefore my recommendation that if after three more months time Miss Tendo fails to show improvement she be remanded, for the safety of males everywhere, to the custody of the special high security women's prison in Hokkaido there to reside for the remainder of her natural life.'

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 10 by cobalt blue

Setting down the pen Inuyasha studied what he'd written out under Dr. Tofu's careful directions.

This was the second letter he'd written in this fashion today, the other having already been given to Godzilla to be delivered to the faraway Amazon village. In another ritual performed shortly after Ranma recovered from taking on the mantle of the Lord of Cats he bestowed upon his five feline friends several very special and useful gifts.

Flashback...

Two swift flashes of silver across bared flesh, a spill of hot crimson into five waiting bowls finished the first part of the ritual. All that remained was for his loyal felines to drink.

"Come, partake of my essence, partake of my power." Ranma intoned solemnly.

As one the cats moved forwards, dipping their heads down, rough tongues lapping up their Lord's freely shed blood as if it were the finest cream. "You are my Chosen and to you I impart these gifts; strength, speed, speech, longevity, and instant travel so that you may spread my will to the farthest corners of my Lands."

The cats worked furiously at cleaning the porcelain bowls. It was time for the final gifts to be

given before the last drop of blood disappeared.

“To Godzilla, the gift of fire; may you live up to your namesake.” And for a moment the Ragdoll’s crystalline eyes and fur blazed with crackling blue fire anyone who’d seen the giant monster’s movies would instantly recognize.

“To Lotus, the gift of wind; may your voice shatter my enemies will.” A soft breeze stirred the Siamese’ pelt but didn’t so much as shift a single hair on the cats besides her.

“To Pitch, the gift of earth; may your passing shake the world.” Black fur shone with a green light and a fine tremor went through the dojo’s floorboards.

“To Max, the gift of water; may you bring chaos to my enemies.” If a cat’s face could express sadistic glee the shorthair would be sporting one which would shock and terrify every cursed individual in Nerima and beyond.

“To Athea, she who is the heart, the gift of spirit; may your light reveal all truths and cleanse away evil.” A gentle golden light played across the Bobtail’s tortoiseshell marked fur, its warmth soothing the nerves of everyone present.

End Flashback...

“I still don’t see how this flimsy piece of paper’s gonna make the Amazons give up on Ranma.” Golden eyes turned to his mate’s new father. “If they’re only half as obsessive as Ranma’s made them out to be they’re not gonna stop just because he’s mated to me.”

“Cologne is an Amazon Elder so she should know how valuable the treaty is to her tribe. She won’t do anything which might break that protection.” The good doctor said as he sipped his tea. “Not to mention what the other Elders will do to her if she has a momentary slip of reason and attacks anyway.”

“And the bimbo?” That was the name Inuyasha had picked out for the young purple-haired Amazon; using her proper name was giving the bitch too much respect in his eyes. She was just another obsessive little slut whose deplorable manners, violent tendencies, and almost complete lack of concern for others had driven away virtually every suitor that ever turned an eye towards her.

The only people Shampoo cared about was herself and Cologne, the only things Shampoo cared about were her position in the tribe and the potential strength of her heirs. To her Ranma was just prize breeding stock, nothing more. If she and that wizened old crone ever succeeded in dragging Ranma back to their village he would’ve spent the rest of his life being beaten and drugged into complete submission, force fed potions to ensure he performed his ‘marital’ duties in siring as many strong children as possible before he either died from the mistreatment or the two bitches saw no more use for him and removed him from that miserable existence themselves.

“Shampoo’s determination to have Ranma will probably make her disobey her Great-Grandmother so we’d best be on extra special guard after Max delivers that letter.” Tofu locked eyes with his son-in-law “And I want Kirara to stay with you at all times. I know you are a powerful combatant but in your current condition just one lucky shot might seriously harm you or your child. Better to weigh in on the safe side here.”

Inuyasha grumbled a bit but finally agreed to keep the demon cat with him as Tofu requested. It irked him that a warrior of his status and skill had to depend on others for his protection but his momentarily stronger maternal instincts won out. His cub’s life was more important than his pride.

“Good, now all we have to do is send this to Cologne.” The doctor folded up the letter and

handed it to the waiting Max. "Please take this letter to Cologne at the Cat Café if you would Max."

The shorthair dipped his head. // Am I to wait for a reply Healer? //

"No you'd best leave as soon as it's in her hands. She might just decide to vent a bit of her anger on you if you stay around and provide her with a target."

// Very well Healer. // Max bowed again and quickly trotted out the door.

"What now?" The half demon asked the doctor though it was a bit hard to understand since he yawned right in the middle of it.

"Now you should take a nap. Kasumi will wake you when it's time for lunch." Tofu rose up and assisted his gravid son-in-law in rising as well. "I have an errand of my own to run so if I'm not back by the time she sets the table you don't have to wait for me."

"Where are you going?"

A pensive look came over the normally smiling doctor's face. "To face a rather nasty bitch."

"Will you be back in time for the meeting with the Sensei?" The message had come earlier that morning via one of the Sensei's cat advisors. The entire group, both inner and outer Scouts, would be showing up at noon to speak to Ranma about something they considered extremely important.

"Hopefully my conversation won't take too long. I don't expect her to be very cooperative but given her lack of general intelligence I should get something."

After Nodoka had finished getting 'reacquainted' with her husband the police moved him to a separate cell and treated the worst of his injuries. It wouldn't do to have the slimy bastard die before he could pay for all his crimes. Since that time the two Saotomes had been periodically breaking into a heated conversation over the worthlessness of their son and whose fault it was he turned out that way. Genma, now safe from his wife's vengeful physical wrath, held his ground when she accused him of failing to uphold his end of the contract. He said the boy had been a failure from the start thanks to her early interference in his life. The argument might've went on forever if the guards hadn't told them to shut up they would both be muzzled. Rather than be subjected to that humiliation Nodoka and Genma fell into a tense silence.

The only real visitors either of the pair had were two lawyers who'd at last agreed to take the Saotome's cases solely on the Captain's appeal to their sense of civic duty. Without proper representation one or both Saotomes might say that their trial was unfair and have their convictions overturned. Since no one in the legal system wanted to see these two loose once more the lawyers took the case. They would defend their clients to the best of their abilities but consoled themselves with the fact that with the tremendous amounts of evidence against them neither of the twisted pair would ever see a day of freedom again.

However today was different. Today they had another visitor.

Doctor Tofu.

"How dare you show your face here after what you've done!!" Genma snarled and slammed himself against the bars, totally forgetting the heavy current running thru them and receiving a nasty jolt of electricity for his efforts. It would take Genma quite a while to recover from that shock

which left Tofu and Nodoka to talk alone for a time.

From the level of hate displayed in the caged woman's eyes Tofu was thankful for the electrified bars separating Nodoka from him. Without that solid protection the physician was sure the woman would've tried to kill him barehanded.

"We need to talk."

"I have nothing to say to you." She turned her back to him.

"Who is Ranma's real father?" He kept his voice calm and controlled; it wouldn't do for him to lose his temper so early in the conversation.

"Genma is of course."

"I know that's a lie. Genma isn't Ranma's biological father. DNA doesn't lie about such matters." Eyes trained to seek out body language noted how Nodoka's shoulders tensed slightly when he mentioned DNA.

"Genma is not Ranma's father." He repeated firmly.

By now the fat fool in the other cell was up on all fours shaking his head to clear the cobwebs. It took him a few moments before he could focus on his surroundings and the conversation taking place between the doctor and his wife.

"No Genma is not Ranma's true father."

"WHAT?!!!" Genma screeched and lurched to his feet, just barely stopping himself from throwing himself against the bars and receiving another dose of electricity. "OF COURSE THE BOY'S MY SON!!!"

"No he's not," Nodoka turned around to stare seriously at her imprisoned husband and the Doctor whom her son now called Father. "During the physical before the wedding it was discovered that Genma was sterile, incapable of siring children. Since I desired the old Saotome name I destroyed the true test records and substituted someone else's in its place. Once the marriage was done I counted my cycle and on my most fertile day drugged Genma and went in search of a sire for my child."

"Me? Stt-err-ile??" Genma stuttered in rage. "That's a lie!!!"

Nodoka spat out a sharp laugh. "You are sterile. And even if you hadn't been I would have done the same thing again! You are nothing but a fat, lazy, glutton with the IQ and honor of a mole. The only redeeming factors you had in your favor was your name and the small skill in martial arts you possessed. You didn't need to be Ranma's biological father to pass those on to the boy."

"Then who is the boy's real father?" Saotome snapped back at his wife, or should he say soon-to-be ex-wife. Since she'd been unfaithful to him he had good cause to divorce her. Half her estate should come to a hefty little sum.

Now a cold smile graced her pale pink lips. "I met him at the Jade Tiger; a high class club, one that caters to rich businessmen, celebrities, and sports stars from all countries. He was by far one of the most handsome men there. Clear blue eyes, thick shiny hair, and a firm body. He had an air of power, intelligence, and of danger to him that drew many women to his side that night and I was hard pressed to secure him for myself. It didn't take that much persuasion to entice him into taking me back to his room at the Hilton."

“YOU SLUT!!”

“He was far more a man in bed than you could even hope to be.” Nodoka had to rub it in as to just how much of a failure her husband was in his marital duties. “The sex lasted for hours instead of your partly four minutes of fumbling and grunting. His stamina and skill were absolutely amazing; I lost count of how many orgasms I had.” Her smile turned wicked. “Hmmm, perhaps it had something to do with him being a Ganjin.”

“A GANJIN!!” By now Genma was frothing at the mouth.

“Of course. I wanted my child to have an exotic air, to be strong, to be tall. He wouldn’t have possessed any of those traits if I’d chosen a Japanese man.”

“But do you know his name?”

Nodoka blinked, then laughed. “Perhaps I do, perhaps I don’t. Since Ranma no longer acknowledges me as his son I don’t have to answer any questions about him or his heritage.”

Tofu sighed in resignation. He hadn’t expected the woman to just hand him a name on a silver platter but he’d managed to get more information out of her than she probably knew. He had a general description, a place, a hotel name, and after counting back from the time of Ranma’s birth a time span in which to check.

Tofu glanced at his watch; 11:23 am. Time to go.

He would set the investigation in motion just as soon as he returned home. Without sparing another glance towards either one of the caged wastes of human flesh the good Doctor left, his ears picking up the start of another argument starting before the door even finished closing.

The meeting between Ranma, Inuyasha, and the Sensei wasn’t going well at all. The girls were all talking, well more like demanding, that he sacrifice himself for the good of humanity; the fact that he was mated and soon to be a father didn’t faze them or change their request in the slightest. Rather than just kick the whole bunch of loonies out on their barely covered asses Ranma asked them to explain themselves which unfortunately the girls were only too eager to do so. He should’ve known better than to ask a group of girls to talk; it took two hours for the whole wacky story to come out.

Ranma now faced the group of scantily clad magical girls, making sure to keep himself between them and his gravid mate at all times. He wouldn’t put it past a couple of the more overzealous girls to attack his mate to force Ranma to obey their commands.

“Okay, let me see if I’ve got this right. Somewhere in the future there’s gonna be a big disaster that’ll destroy Earth’s global environment. You girls freeze the whole planet to stop it and ages later thaw everybody out. You then take over and use that hunk of crystal blondie’s got to ‘cleansed’ everybody of their negative energy. Those that don’t want to be ‘cleansed’ you brand as evil and exile them to a barren hunk of cold rock in space. Have I got it right so far?”

“Basically yes.” Pluto said; she would’ve worded the explanation a bit more elegantly but for now it would do.

“So this ‘cleansing’ business takes all of a person’s negative energy and all the emotions that go with them.”

Sailor Moon nodded eagerly and smiled. “Yes, all the hate, anger, sorrow, everything! It leaves

the people so very peaceful and happy.”

Ranma frowned and shook his head, ears laid back as he began to pace. On the surface their plan sounded so nice, like a paradise on earth; but that was only on the surface. Scrape beneath that sparkling vision and the horrible hidden reality reared up its ugly rotting head. He shuddered in revulsion at the mere thought of a shattered earth populated by a mass of happy controlled corpses.

No. This couldn't be allowed. It must not come to pass.

“Now do you understand why you must die? If you live Crystal Tokyo will never happen.” Setsuna's voice held a rarely heard pleading note in its cultured depths. He just had to see this was the right thing to do. If Ranma had any feelings for humanity at all he would allow the Scouts to kill him thus ensuring the bright wonderful future that awaited them.

“No.”

“No? You don't understand?” Mercury asked.

“No, as in I refuse to die so you can set up you little mind-controlled dictatorship.”

“WHAT??!!!!”

“Everything sounds so sweet, so perfect. But past experience has taught me very painfully to take a second look at everything, especially if it sounds too good to be true. The disaster that destroyed the ecosystem could've been stopped, most likely by the very people or the descendants of the people you and those two dikes have been slaughtering.” His insult bounced off Pluto but Neptune had to forcefully restrain her blonde lover. “There is a balance to everything in the universe; Ying and Yang. How can you tell if you love someone if you don't know what hate is first? Can you truly feel calm if there isn't anger to compare it to? Without sorrow happiness is nothing more than a false mask. By taking away half the emotions that make us human you're creating nothing more than a bunch of smiling animated corpses!”

“That's not true!”

“Isn't it? Let me ask you a couple of things. In this Crystal Tokyo are there any babies being born on a regular basis? What's the suicide rate? Have there been any great works of art, literature, or music being created? Has there???” He directed his questions towards the one girl who the answer to those questions; Pluto.

“Go ahead Pluto, answer him!!!”

But Setsuna couldn't answer him.

“Setsuna, tell him!” But still the older girl remained silent; her head hung low, face hidden by her long locks.

“Can't answer? Then let me take a guess. The only folks that are having babies are the ones bubblehead there hasn't wiped with her shiny stone.”

“Hey!” Sailor Moon squealed at the insult.

Ignoring the outraged blond Ranma went on. “Suicide is a common occurrence among the wiped people, and the only ones being creative are those same un-wiped folks. Am I correct lady?” When Setsuna remained silent Ranma started to lose his patience and snapped.

“ANSWER ME!!!”

Flinching away from the angry Cat Lord and seeing as she had no other recourse Pluto finally decided to talk. “Yes, you’re right. The Sensei and a few of the Castle’s elite guards are the only ones who have been able to successfully conceive and carry a child to term, everyone else fails to conceive naturally and miscarries any implanted fetus within two days.”

“And the rest?” The one called Mercury, who had a disturbing resemblance to his most violent ex-fiancée, urged her fellow Sensei.

“He is correct there as well. The people of Crystal Tokyo lack the motivation to create anything.”

“That’s not surprising.” Dr. Tofu shook his head. He knew these girls were stupid but they couldn’t be this dense could they? “When you stripped away their negative energy you destroyed a section of their souls. You took away a part that makes them human and doomed each and every one to spend the rest of their lives as shadows of what humans truly are. Women whose souls have been damaged in such a fashion can’t support a baby since she gives a little of her soul and life force to the growing fetus. With her soul shredded she can’t give the baby anything so she loses it. You’ve probably developed some kind of artificial machine to carry babies so that the population remains stable but children made this way probably are weak and slow at best, mentally unbalanced at worst.”

One lone tear slipped down Pluto’s tanned cheek. What Ranma and Dr. Tofu were saying was absolutely correct. When the problems with the city’s inhabitants first came to light it was thought as nothing, just the people having difficulty adjusting to their new and better society. But as the months passed and matters got worse not better the investigation started. The findings were both startling and terrifying. The number of people committing suicide was rising at a steady rate, the birth rate had plummeted to zero, and the advance and development of their new culture had come to a screeching halt. Every means available was brought to bear to correct these disturbing problems but their efforts brought their own set of problems. Babies grown and birthed from artificial wombs lacked something; most were slow and rather dull witted and those few who seemed normal later became dangerously violent, a true threat to everyone they came into contact with, to be allowed to live amongst the general population. It was a terrible tragedy that no one had foresaw.

“It’s not your right to dictate the future of humanity, it’s not your right to destroy the planet’s plant and animal life, it’s not your right to rip apart people’s souls just because you think they’ll be better off for it.” Ranma’s eyes were glowing, his tail lashing angrily.

“But Crystal Tokyo...” Sailor Moon whined.

“Will never be. I’ll strip your powers and leave you as simple mortals and if you fight me I won’t hesitate to kill you. I’d be doing the future a favor by taking you morons out of the gene pool.” By now a fierce red aura was raging about the Cat Lord, his feline eyes glowing like twin orbs of fresh magma. Behind him Mousse, Kirara, and Dr. Tofu were positioning themselves as a shield around Inuyasha. If matters dissolved into a battle they would spirit the gravid demon to safety and guard him with their very lives. Ranma was more than capable of handling this crowd of imbeciles by himself and probably would be angry if they interfered.

Ranma stood tense and ready. He fully expected at least one of the girls to react violently towards his final declaration. His intuition proved correct.

Shaking herself free of her lover’s embrace Uranus threw herself at the one who had just sung Crystal Tokyo’s death knell, the only thought on her mind was beating the damned man to a bloody pulp.

Ranma didn't sidestep. As soon as the woman was within range he struck. Uranus didn't even have time to gasp before one long clawed hand seized her by the throat. Holding her effortlessly off the floor Ranma sent a surge of power thru his arm the struggling woman. Uranus silently screamed as red energy crackled along her body. Right before the rest of shocked Scouts eyes their fellow Sensei's fuku turned back to her everyday clothes. Once he was sure his captive was completely subdued Ranma released his grip, letting the limp woman fall down to the ground.

"Don't worry, it's only temporary. Think of it as a warning. Cross me again, do anything I might consider an attempt to kill me, and I will make her change permanent and do the same thing to all of you as well. Crystal Tokyo is a dead dream. I will not allow you to create any empire here on Earth. If you want to make an empire go back to the Moon Kingdom and restore it, that's your ancestral land anyways." At that moment Ranma looked every bit the Lord he truly was.

For a moment some of the Scouts considered trying to succeed where Uranus had failed but didn't want to risk loosing their power permanently.

Pluto hung her head in shame. So intent upon creating the bright and beautiful future she envisioned Crystal Tokyo to be Setsuna had blinding herself to the hideous truths at its heart. Without saying a word to her fellow Scouts Pluto stood and slowly walked out of the room. Sailor Moon nodded to her friends and one by one the others followed suit, Jupiter assisting Neptune in dragging the still unconscious Uranus out with them.

Ranma waited till they walked out the gate before turning to the waiting Pitch. "Spread the word Pitch. I want a round the clock watch on the Scouts. I don't trust them, they gave up too easy."

The ebony cat bowed his head. // It shall be as you say My Lord. //

To Elder Ku Lon,

This is to inform you that the one known as Ranma Saotome is now the mate of I, Inuyasha, son of the Inutaishou, Lord of the Western Lands. In accordance with the ancient treaty all Amazon claims upon Ranma Saotome are now void. You and your great-granddaughter will cease all capture and subdue attempts on Ranma or I will declare the treaty broken and leave your tribe to the mercy of your enemies the Musk. Be aware that a similar letter has already been delivered and in the hands of your fellow Amazon Elders.

Cologne held the offending scrap of paper in one thin skeletal hand while the other flipped through the ancient law book of the Amazons, her eyes searching furiously to find some loop hole which might yet lead to Shampoo claiming Ranma as her husband.

If it were anyone else, anyone at all, the elder would've urged her great-granddaughter to seek out and slay this new obstacle without a moment's hesitation. But this was different; there was a very important treaty involved here, one that had kept her tribe safe for many centuries. Just one wrong move and the treaty and the magical protections on their lands would fall within a heartbeat. The Musk would waste no time in launching an attack on their weakened enemies.

Ranma's defeating Herb and later Saffron in battle had weakened the two tribes considerably and had kept them from moving on Amazon territory. The Phoenix people were too busy looking after their reborn Lord to bother with the Amazons for some time to come. But the Musk were gaining strength each day, being held back from attacking the amazons directly solely by the treaty. If Ranma was brought into the tribe as Shampoo's husband the Amazons could attack the Musk on their enemy's own home territory and thus avoid breaking the treaty. Once the Musk were gone they could breed up their numbers for an eventual assault on the Phoenix people. Shampoo wouldn't mind sharing Ranma with a few other women so long as it was

acknowledged he was ultimately her property.

But how was that dream to become reality now?

The pact with the Lord of the Western Lands was still in effect. Ranma's mate was the Lord's son and so according to the treaty both he and Ranma were untouchable by any Amazon. If she or Shampoo were to attack Inuyasha they would be breaking the magical treaty, a fact which would be immediately felt by every magically sensitive individual within a hundred mile radius of the village; it would have the same effect as lowering a side of beef into a tank full of hungry sharks.

It was for this very reason she hadn't informed her great-granddaughter of the letter and its shocking contents. Cologne had the restraint of age and wisdom on her side but Shampoo was another matter. The young warrior lacked patience and would've set off immediately to eliminate the threat to claiming Ranma. The girl was just too headstrong sometimes for her own good; she constantly failed to think about the consequences of her actions. Not only would an attack break the treaty it would undoubtedly enrage Ranma. The black haired martial artist had killed Saffron to protect Akane, what would he do to protect someone he truly loved? Cologne shuddered at the mere thought; there wouldn't be enough left of Shampoo's body to fill a sewing thimble.

So here she sat, pouring through her law book, hunting for something, anything that she could use to salvage her great-granddaughter's honor and perhaps her very life.

Kagome sighed in relief as she opened the well building's doors and was greeted by the skyline of modern Tokyo. She was home again.

After Inuyasha left she and the others were left with the task of seeing to the wounded and burying the dead. So busy with these grim tasks that none of the remaining shard hunters had any time to think about the implications of the half demon's departure from their little troupe. It was only after a week had passed and the rebuilding of the village was well under way that there was time to think such thoughts. Without Inuyasha's superior strength and fighting skills the group was at a severe disadvantage. True they no longer had to fear Naraku but that didn't change the fact that other demons existed out there whose power, once amplified by a jewel shard, might be more than their meager band could now safely handle.

But that brought another thought to mind.

Kagome couldn't feel any more shards in the past. They hadn't found all the fragments yet, the jewel was still incomplete. So where were the remaining pieces? Kaede had several ideas on that; perhaps they were under heavy wards or maybe the shards had been removed from Japan and thus were out of the girl's sensing range. Neither prospect sounded very good. If pieces of the jewel had been taken to other countries how were she and the others supposed to find them? Kagome could spend the rest of her life hunting for the fragments and still come up short. And a well made and properly spelled ward could block her senses just as it had with that accursed mask.

Behind her Miroku and Sango were gazing at the modern Tokyo skyline in awe. Both had decided that it would be for them to accompany Kagome home to see if her belief about the remaining shards being her in time was correct. It would probably take a few days for the pair to get accustomed to all the new things this time had to offer. After that they'd search for Inuyasha.

Soun Tendo stared down into his sake cup something which he'd been doing for the last three hours.

How had things gone so wrong? Akane was supposed to be happily married and pregnant by now. Nabiki would've been in college. And Kasumi would be where she always was; tending to the house and its inhabitants. He and Genma would've been relaxing on the porch playing shogi while Ranma sweated through classes in the dojo.

It would've been so perfect, just the way he and his dear old friend first envisioned it.

Now that dream was being irrevocably shattered. Kasumi was gone, her reasons for leaving completely foolish in his opinion. She was needed here to take care of them all, not gallivanting around with some boy she claimed to love. Clearly she'd forgotten where her duty and honor truly lie.

Nabiki was up on criminal charges though Soun was certain those fraudulent claims would be dismissed as soon as the police got their facts straight. Really, who could possibly believe his daughter capable of such low illegal dealings as what they were accusing her of. The very idea of it was preposterous.

And Akane, his dear sweet little girl, was listed as being a violent maniac and was under the 'care' of a trained therapist. HAH! Trained his ass!! The woman looked like she just stepped out of some extreme bondage/domination magazine! What respectable medical practitioner walked around in leather like that?

Both Genma and his wife were in jail though again he believed they would be out soon enough. The Nerima police must be hiring their detectives from the monkey exhibit at the local zoo they were so stupid. Imagine thinking such a fine upstanding citizen as Genma was really a long term criminal wanted for an immense list of felonies and lesser crimes! And his wife was the very picture of a proper Japanese wife; so she couldn't possibly have done anything to warrant the charge of attempted murder being laid on her.

One hand clenched around the old newspaper which reported on Genma and Nodoka's arrest. The article stated that Ranma had been accepted into Doctor Tofu's clan. That the boy was now an Ono made little difference to the Tendo patriarch. Ranma was his daughter's fiancée and no change of name was going to alter that. Once everything was straitened out between his girls, the Saotomes, and the authorities they'd force the boy back and see him wed to Akane even if they had to drug him almost to the point of a coma to do it.

With a proper plan laid out Soun settled back to enjoy his sake and take out sushi, so lost in his pipe dreams he wasn't even aware of the diabolical plans being hatched above his head in his daughter's room.

Negotiations were going well. Nabiki was pleased with the reports her remaining contacts had managed to sneak in under the undercover surveillance which the police had set up around her house shortly after her release. Currently she had two top underworld families and three international terrorist groups vying to add her immense talents to their organizations. Now all she had to do was pick the one which offered her the best opportunities and arrange for the creation of her bonus prize.

The therapist that Akane had been seeing, some fellow named Clyde, had finally agreed that her sister might benefit from seeing her family. She was to spend the upcoming weekend with them and then return to her current housing Monday morning. Just a couple of little reminders about Ranma's opinion of her cooking and the fact that much of their misery was his doing and Akane would be angry enough to create a culinary catastrophe the likes of which had never been seen before even in the foulest demon's nightmares.

And what about Ranma?

She couldn't walk away and leave the pig-tailed bastard believing he'd outsmarted her. No Nabiki had no intention of allowing Ranma that pleasure. She'd see him broken and sprawled at her feet before she left. Thanks to the intense media coverage of Ranma's confrontation with his former mother Nabiki now knew where he was hiding. His switching over to the Ono register was a crafty one; it cut off the Saotome pledge avenue of her revenge. She couldn't hold his damn family's so called honor over his head any longer.

A small setback but not an insurmountable one.

There was an old ganjin saying Nabiki was rather fond of; never put all your eggs in one basket. She'd lost one potential weapon over Ranma but the others still remained just as sharp and deadly as when she'd first unearthed them. Now all she had to do was figure out in what order would she use them. Each one in itself was dangerous and could destroy any normal young man's life quite easily. But this was Ranma she was talking about here; each and every one of her secrets would be required to bring him down hard enough to keep him down.

If only Nabiki knew how fruitless her efforts would prove to be.

Flexing her claws the tortoise shell cat rolled over to expose her belly to the warm sunlight. The others were out doing errands and checking the perimeter of the grounds which left Athea to ponder their Lord's predicament.

Why humans believed themselves to be more evolved mentally and physically than cats continued to a source of amusement and irritation for her. True, humans were very talented at creating things like machines but they had developed such an intense dependency on material goods that once deprived of them many humans couldn't survive. A cat removed from human care could usually adapt quite easily to living off the land if they hadn't allowed their instincts to be extinguished like some of those pampered rich cats had.

Ages ago her ancestors reasoned out the advantages of allying themselves with humans and with hard work and care they achieved their goals. Humans didn't domesticate cats, cats allowed humans to believe this in order to use humans for the betterment of the feline race; trading off a bit of affection, companionship, and the use of their hunting skills in order to gain better food, shelter, protection for their young, and aid to the sick and injured. Though they didn't know it humans were the servants of cats and would always remain so.

She no longer considered Lord Ranma a part of the human race and therefore he, given a bit of time, would devise a feline plan to deal with the last meddlesome ties to his old life. But where was the fun for her in that?

She held no belief the Amazons would drop the issue of dragging Lord Ranma into their tribe; such a powerful male was a prize any female worth her fur would fight fang and claw to have for a mate.

No, they would attempt to force Lord Ranma to mate with that purple-haired female and Athea found that utterly unacceptable. In her opinion Lord Inuyasha was a fine mate for her Lord. He was beautiful, intelligent, strong, and a fine warrior from all that Kirara had told her of their past adventures together. Their love was true, the bond between them incredibly strong, and Lord Inuyasha would provide her Lord with many fine kittens which to raise.

One paw lazily scratched at her left ear as she started going thru the facts she knew.

The Amazon Shampoo was the younger of the two and would act impulsively which could

definitely be turned to their advantage. She was a skilled fighter but no where near the level of Lord Ranma or his mate. And of course one must not forget the curse which she carried.

That perhaps would be their best avenue of attack against the girl. Being a feline based curse it placed her in the sphere of Lord Ranma's influence.

The elder one would think before she acted therefore making her the more dangerous opponent. Her great age had given her wisdom and her fighting skills were nothing to shake fur at. Taking her out would require far more preparation and firepower than the younger one.

Hmmm. Perhaps there was a way to slay two birds with one claw.

All the Amazons efforts were geared towards getting Lord Ranma to be the girl's mate.

Therefore she must be 'persuaded' to take another mate.

If she mated with someone else...and it didn't have to be a human...her claim to Lord Ranma would be destroyed.

Sporting a wicked cat grin Athea began planning; once again cat intelligence would triumph over human.

Night fell over Tokyo.

At the ancient shrine set amidst the modern buildings the door to the old well house creaked open. Golden eyes gazed up at the sky, senses taking in all the new sights and smells. If he was going to survive in this new land and time he needed to become accustomed to all of this and quickly.

There was nothing left for him in the past.

Jaken was dead. Rin was dead.

Damn that wolf Koga! Damn him for making that alliance with the Bat and Snake Demons to seize his Lands. At least he had the small satisfaction the mangy beast and all his allies were dead.

But the cost had been too high, far too high. Everything that mattered to him was gone.

He flinched as one broken rib shifted, the gash above it opening again to add a new bloodstain to already soaked bandages. He needed to find a place to rest, somewhere safe to heal himself of his many wounds. A familiar power drifted over his senses and even as muddled as they were he recognized his brother.

"Inuyasha..." Sesshoumaru groaned and marshaled his flagging strength before staggering away into the darkness.

[Back to index](#)

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